



TOP 10 CLINICAL COMMUNICATION TRENDS

Special Report

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Executive Summary

Voalte, the leader in mobile technologies for the healthcare industry, partnered with *American Nurse Today*, the Official Journal of the American Nurses Association, to gain insight into the clinical communication landscape in the nation's hospitals.

As smartphones become the norm in our daily lives, they also are becoming more pervasive in a clinical setting. This survey examines the changing healthcare landscape from a clinical viewpoint to uncover current communication challenges while attempting to predict the future benefits smartphones can deliver.

Our objective was to describe the perceptions of nurse leaders and staff nurses regarding how nurses communicate, the time they spend communicating and their barriers to communication. We explored how those perceptions relate to other nurse activities such as communication inside and outside the hospital, charting and technology decision-making. We were also interested in discovering how the communication challenges perceived by nurse leaders aligned with the perceptions of nurses at the bedside.

We were surprised to discover how much time nurse leaders and staff nurses say they spend on tasks that don't involve hands-on patient care. In fact, nurses report that time spent communicating with colleagues, charting and waiting for critical patient information together consume more than 53% of their shift. For those working a 12-hour shift, that's up to 6.3 hours in which nurses are engaged in an activity other than caring for patients.

On the other hand, we were not surprised to find staff nurses feel that independent of the type of device they use, the biggest communication challenge they face is unnecessary interruptions. That perception is supported by previously published national studies, including "Keeping Patients Safe," by the Institute of Medicine, which showed a correlation between nurse interruptions and a decrease in patient safety.¹

Nurses who have text communication available for use on their nursing units experience fewer communication barriers than nurses who did not have texting available. We found that nurses without texting functions experienced communication barriers on more of their shifts, while those with texting experienced barriers on fewer shifts.

We were encouraged to uncover a positive trend: Half of executive-level nurses report having an influence on their hospitals' technology decisions. That's an encouraging sign, indicating hospital administrators and IT staff are giving CNOs a place at the table when assessing the technology needs of their clinical staff. Unfortunately, our research shows that while nurse leaders believe staff nurses have an opportunity to evaluate communication devices prior to purchase, the overwhelming majority of staff nurses feel they do not have an opportunity to evaluate devices. So while CNOs have a voice in buying decisions, their voices may not necessarily reflect the working realities of staff nurses.





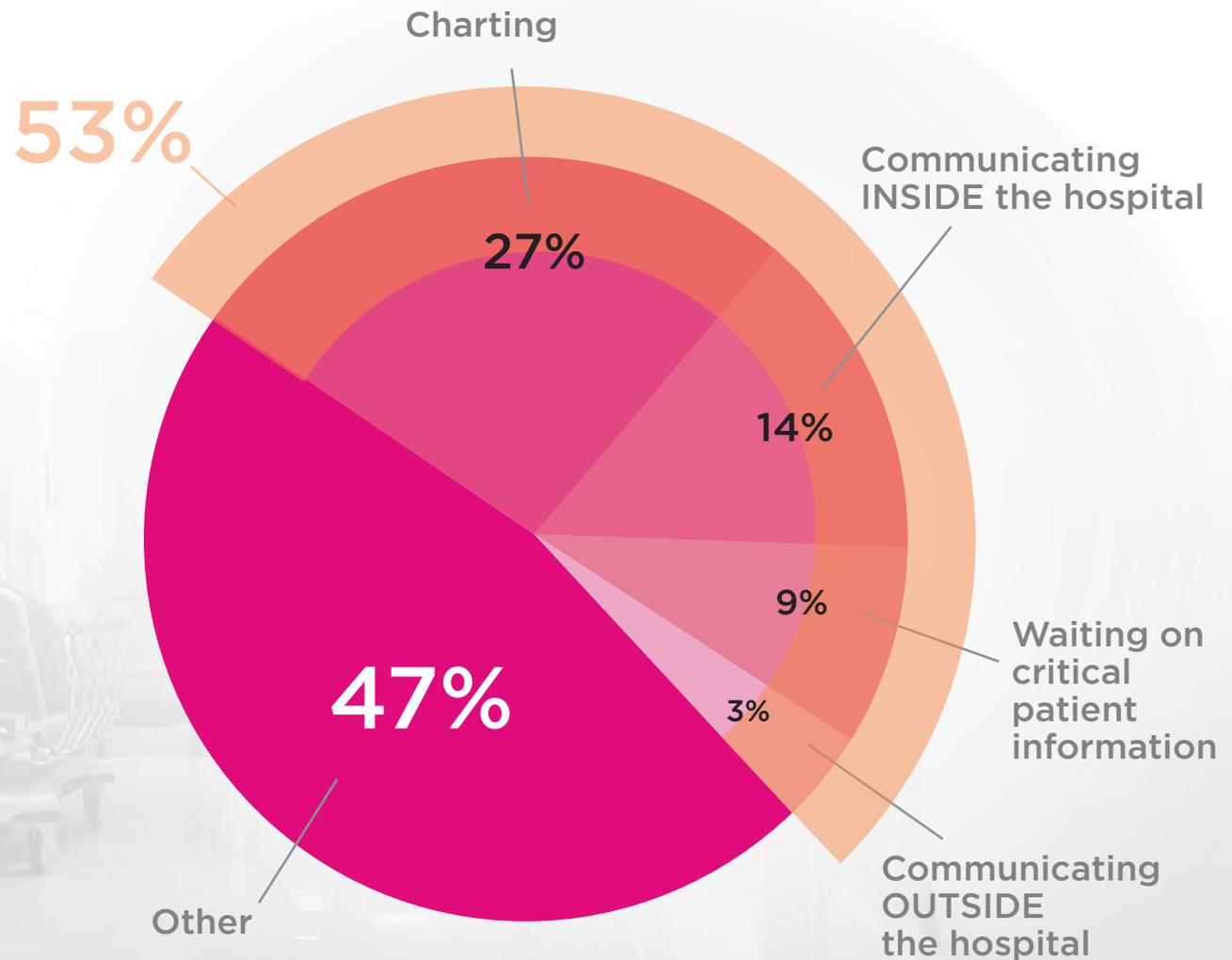
This survey sheds light on how hospital nurses feel about the ability of communication technologies to either impede or improve their ability to care for patients. For the purposes of this Special Report, we focused on 10 key findings.



Nurses Spend More Than *Half Their Time* on Tasks Other than Patient Care

- 53% of staff nurses' shift is spent on tasks other than patient care
- 47% of staff nurses' shift is spent on other nursing tasks

The majority of staff nurses say they spend more than half their shift, or up to 6.3 hours, on tasks such as communicating with colleagues, charting and waiting for critical patient information. Could more seamless communication decrease this time and allow for more bedside care?





Nurses Struggle with

Unnecessary Interruptions

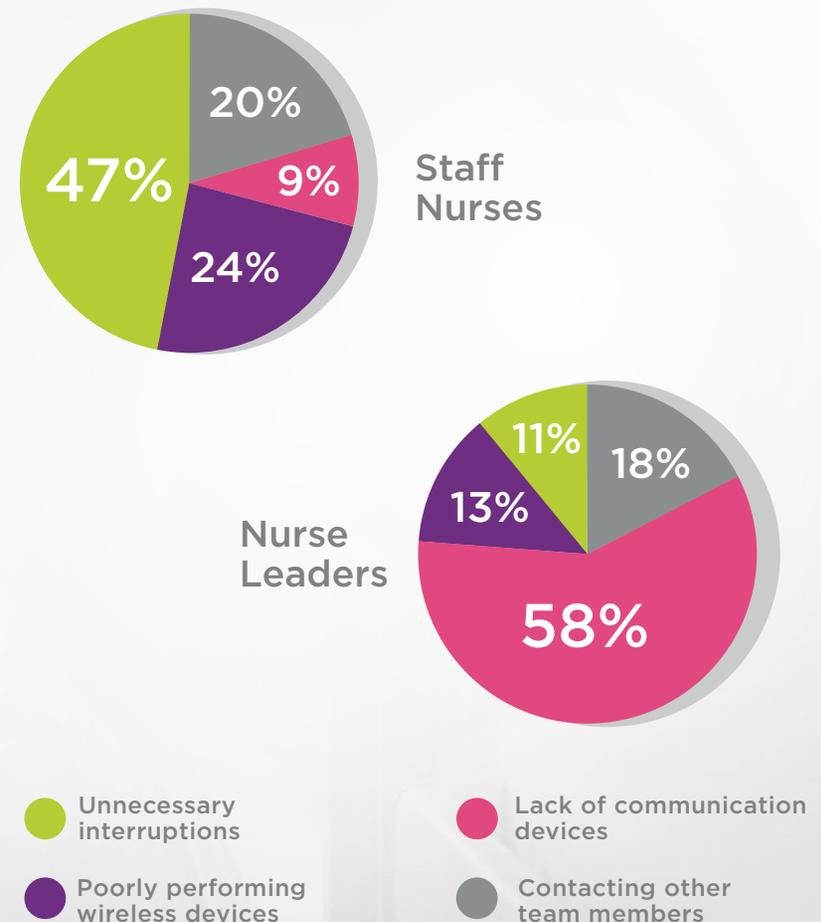
- 47% of staff nurses say unnecessary interruptions are their biggest communication challenge
- 58% of nurse leaders cite lack of devices as their staff's biggest communication challenge

Independent of the type of communication device used, nearly half of staff nurses cited unnecessary interruptions as their biggest communication challenge. Among nurse leaders, however, the biggest challenge was perceived to be a lack of communication devices.

This raises the question: Are nurse leaders unaware of the volume of unnecessary interruptions their staff nurses manage, or do they not recognize the impact of those interruptions?

The ramifications can be serious, with studies such as a 2010 report in the Archives of Internal Medicine, which shows nurse interruptions during medication administration double the chances for a patient to experience a major clinical error.²

Biggest Communication Challenges



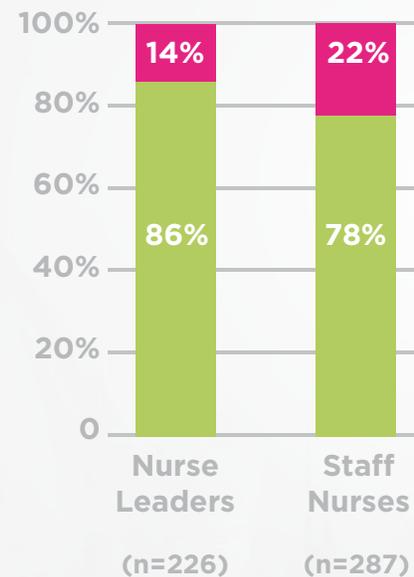


CNOs Drive Technology Decisions

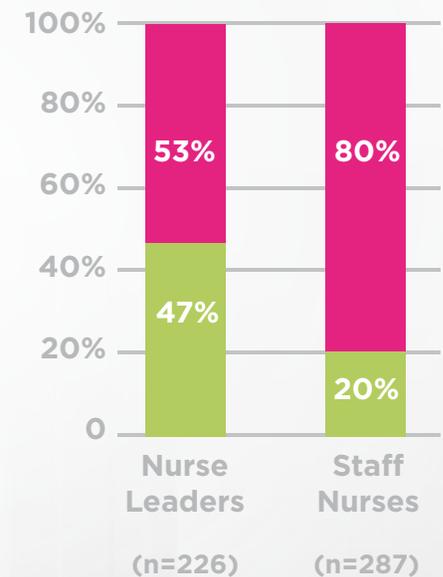
- 86% of nurse leaders believe the CNO influences technology decisions
- 47% of nurse leaders say staff nurses have a chance to evaluate devices
- 20% of staff nurses say they have a chance to evaluate devices

Nurses at all levels perceive that CNOs influence their hospitals' communication technology buying decisions. That's good news, as nurses often have been on the receiving end of technology chosen by executives and IT managers. A discrepancy exists, however, when reporting whether staff nurses also have input on decisions about the devices they use every day. Only 20% of staff nurses feel they have a chance to evaluate new devices, while 47% of nurse leaders believe staff nurses have that input. So while CNOs have a strong voice in buying decisions, their voices may not necessarily reflect the working realities of staff nurses.

% Who Believe CNOs Influence Technology Decisions



% Who Have or Do Not Have a Chance to Evaluate Devices



● No ● Yes



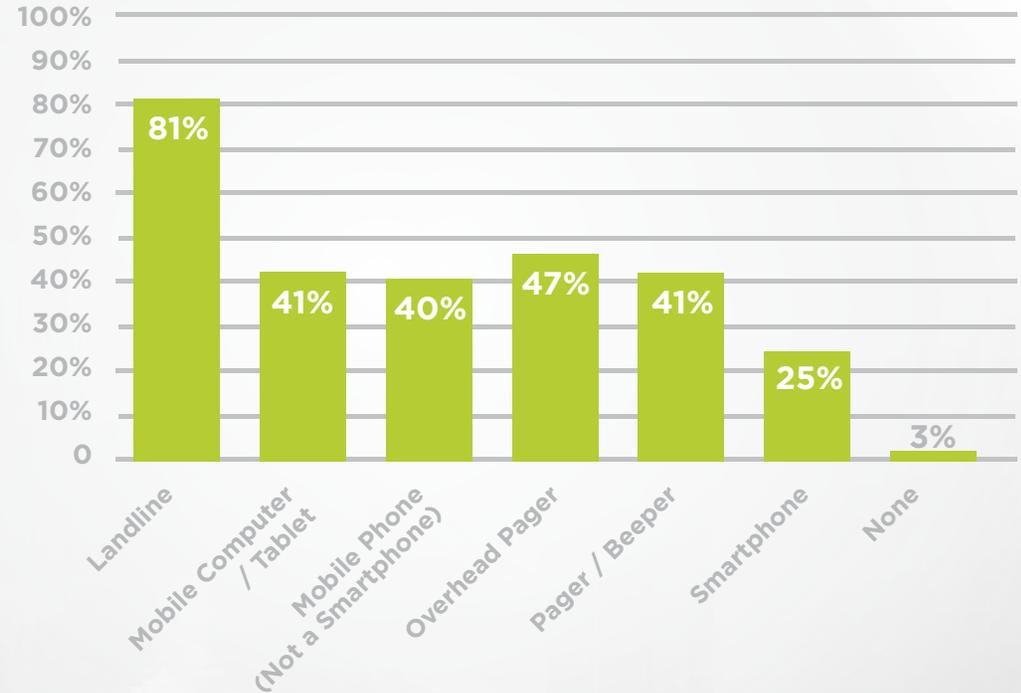
Smartphones at Work

Lag Nurses' Personal Use

- 25% of respondents have smartphones available to support their nursing work
- 81% of respondents have landlines available to support their nursing work
- Landlines are more available than smartphones by a ratio of 3:1

A 2012 Pew Internet study found nearly half of all American adults own a smartphone.³ Our findings reflect that nurses are ahead of that curve, with nearly three-quarters of respondents indicating they use smartphones in their personal lives. Few respondents, however, have the same technology available to support their nursing work. Statistically more nurse leaders indicated the availability of landlines, mobile phones, overhead pagers, pagers and smartphones than nurses.

Percentage of Devices Available to Support Nursing Work





Nurses Need to Report

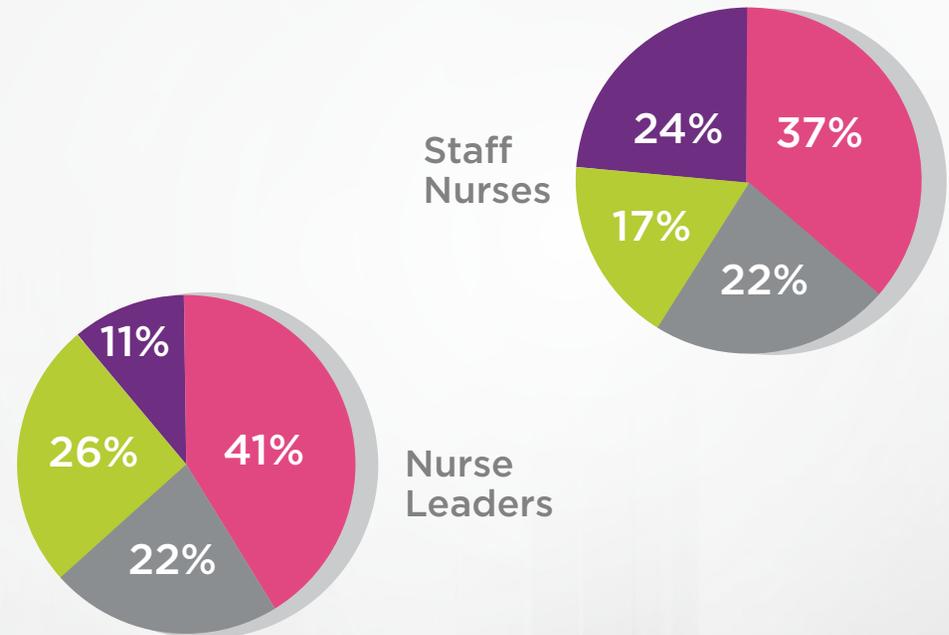
Technology Problems

- 41% of nurse leaders have an informatics committee and have timely correction of issues
- 26% of nurse leaders have an informatics committee and have untimely correction of issues
- 37% of staff nurses have an informatics committee and have timely correction of issues
- 17% of staff nurses have an informatics committee and have untimely correction of issues

This study questions whether nurses who experience communication technology problems have the ability to get those problems corrected efficiently. We found that more than twice as many staff nurses as nurse leaders report they do not have an informatics committee, and issues are not resolved in a timely manner.

Of those who have an informatics committee, twice as many respondents say issues are corrected in a timely manner. This seems to indicate that having an informatics committee is critical to being responsive to technology issues.

Presence of an Informatics Committee and Reporting Issues Results in Timely Correction





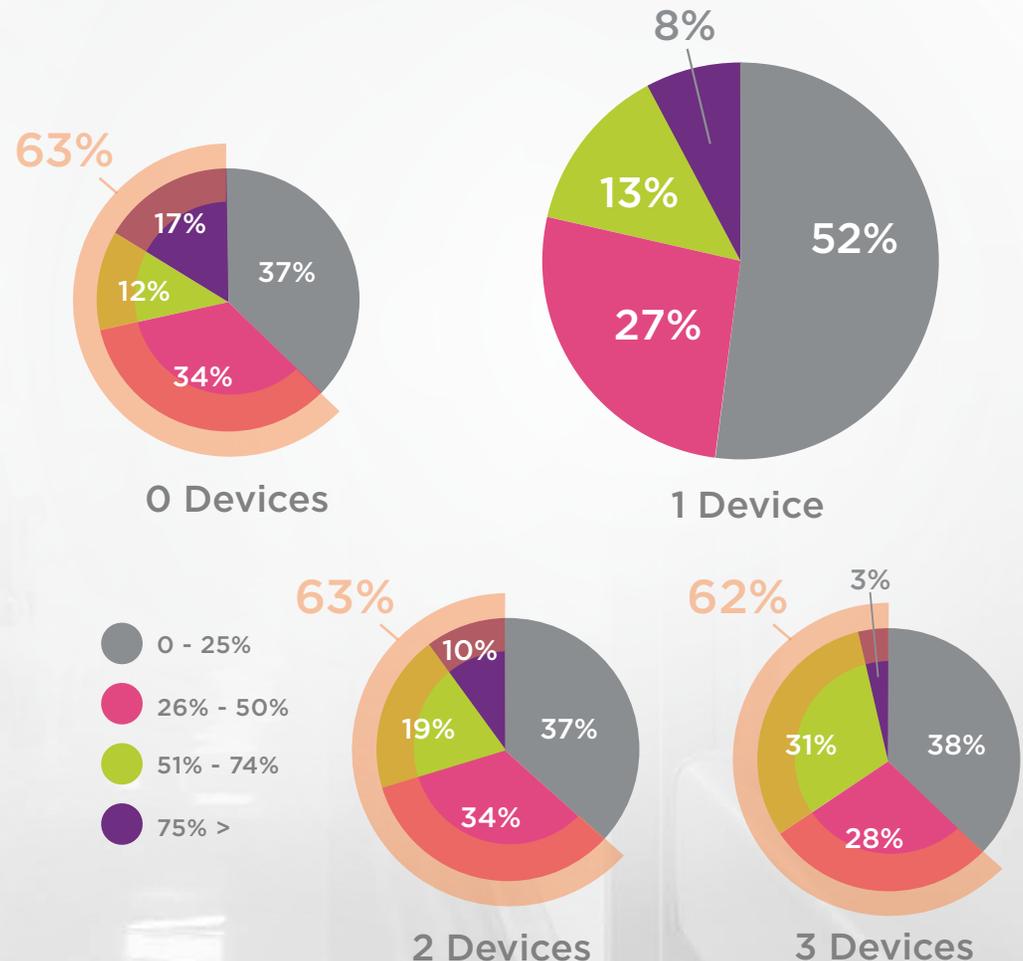
Nurses with 1 Device Experience

Fewer Communication Barriers

- 1 device: 52% of nurses DO NOT experience barriers 75% of their shift

We compared the number of communication devices nurses carry to the percentage of technology barriers they report. Of nurses using one communication device, more than half DO NOT experience technology barriers 75% of the time. Of nurses with two communication devices, 63% experience technology barriers more than 25% of their shift. With the types of barriers unexplained, this jump could be due to cognitive complexity or other factors, but a clear perception exists that carrying only one communication device results in fewer technology barriers.

Percentage of Shifts Communication Technology Barriers Are Experienced





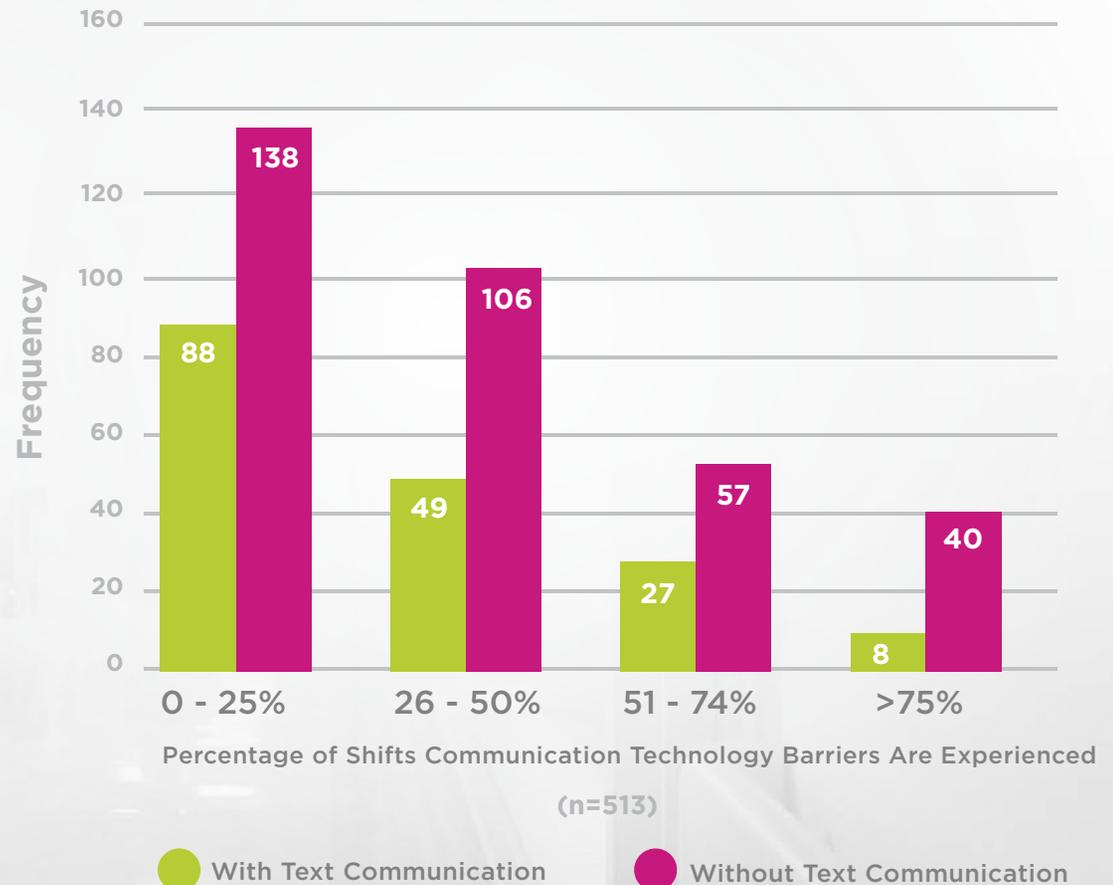
Availability of Texting

Decreases Communication Barriers

- Nurses with text communication experience communication barriers on fewer shifts

We found a statistically significant relationship between text communication and the percentage of shifts in which nurses experience communication barriers. Those who have text communication available experience far fewer communication barriers than those without texting capabilities.

Communication Technology Barriers with and without Text Communication





Nurses Communicate with Colleagues

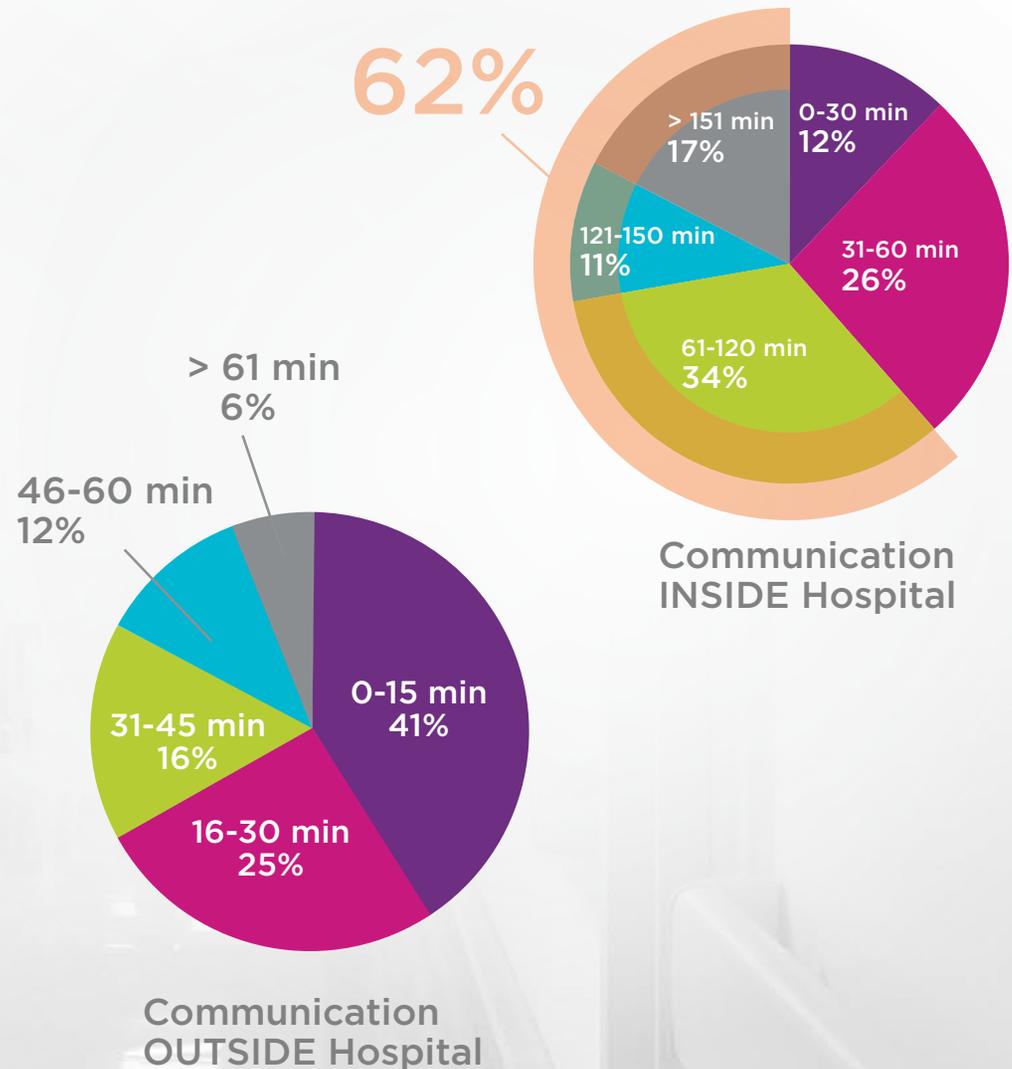
Inside and Outside the Hospital

- **62% of nurses spend more than 60 minutes communicating INSIDE the hospital per shift**

The majority of staff nurses report working shift lengths of 5-8 or 9-12 hours, and spend a significant amount of that time communicating with their colleagues.

We found most nurses spend more time communicating with clinicians, physicians and providers inside the hospital, but also spent ample time communicating with colleagues outside the hospital.

A statistically significant relationship indicated that as nurses spend more time communicating inside the hospital, they also spend more time communicating with colleagues outside the hospital. For seamless communication, this seems to indicate the importance of a device that works equally well inside and outside the hospital walls.





Nurses Communicate with Non-Clinical Units

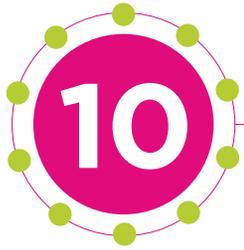
- Staff nurses spend more time on patient dietary needs and environmental services than nurse leaders believe they spend

Across all reasons why nurses communicate during a shift, nurse leaders and staff nurses agree they most often communicate about new patient orders or updates to physicians. Results show a statistically significant difference, however, on how often nurses follow up on patient dietary needs and environmental services.

Mean Ranking of Follow-up on Patient Dietary Needs and Environmental Services



Reasons for communication were ranked from 1 (least often) to 5 (most often).



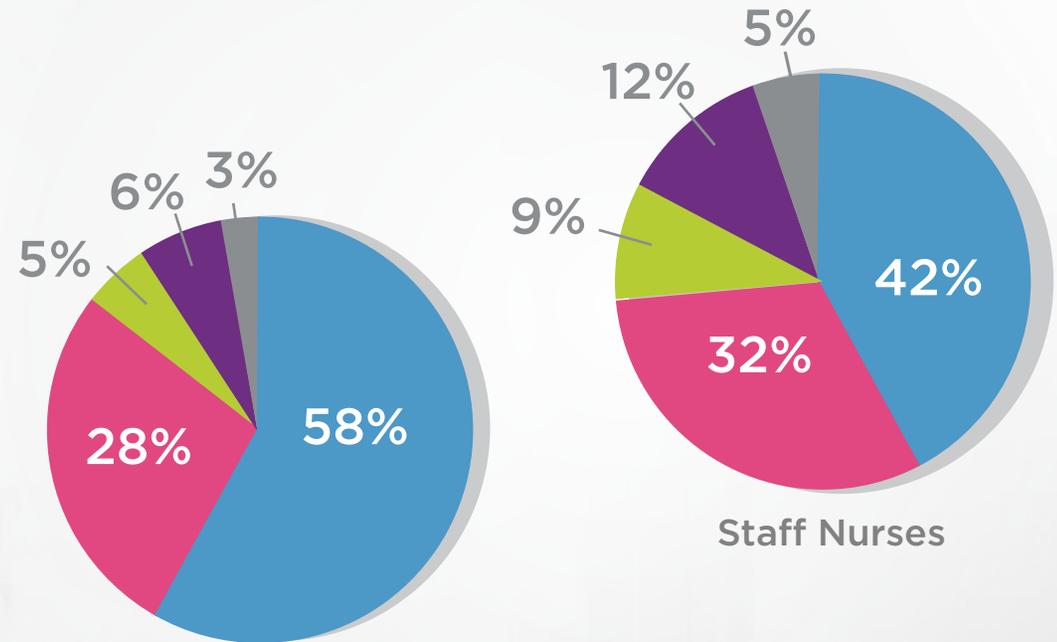
Communication Devices Have the Potential to *Improve Quality of Care*

Chief impact of clinical communication devices:

- 58% of nurse leaders report more time by the bedside
- 42% of staff nurses report more time by the bedside
- 28% of nurse leaders report less patient care errors
- 32% of staff nurses report less patient care errors

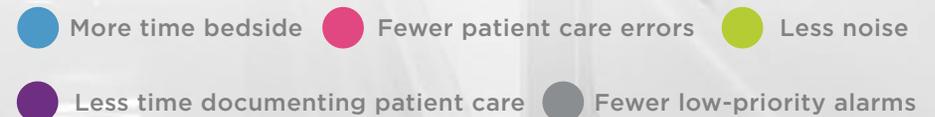
Nurse leaders and staff nurses agree that the biggest impacts of communication devices are more bedside care and fewer patient care errors. Given some of our main findings above, such as time spent communicating, charting and waiting on information, and the volume of unnecessary interruptions, we can presume nurses feel more efficient communication alternatives would result in more time to care for patients.

Biggest Impact of a Clinical Communication Device



Nurse Leaders

Staff Nurses





Conclusion

As we examined the changing healthcare landscape from a clinical perspective, we found the perceptions of nurse leaders and staff nurses differ on how nurses communicate, whether they have a voice in technology decisions, and the barriers to communication they experience. On the other hand, nurses at all levels seem to agree that efficient communication is key to increasing the amount of time nurses spend caring for patients and the quality of the care they provide.

By offering their opinions in this survey, nurses make it clear that their primary communication concerns revolve around caring for patients at the bedside, and reducing the number of unnecessary interruptions that negatively impact their ability to do so. Interestingly, survey results show that a decrease in the number of devices nurses carry corresponds to a decrease in communication barriers, fewer patient errors and an increase in amount of time to care for patients. Results also show that the availability of texting on nursing units decreases the communication barriers nurses experience.

We were encouraged to find that Chief Nursing Officers have earned a seat at the table when hospitals are making technology decisions, but disappointed to find that those decisions do not necessarily reflect the input of staff nurses. As the number of nurses using smartphones in their private lives continues to increase, their voices are becoming louder as they demand seamless access to information at work. With landlines still dominating smartphones as a clinical communication device by a ratio of 3-to-1, hospitals have some catching up to do with the general population.

With the 2010 Affordable Care Act posing the broadest overhaul of the healthcare system since the creation of Medicare and Medicaid, the industry is rethinking the role of communication technologies and assessing the ways those technologies can support patient care. As smartphones become ubiquitous in many workplaces, the American hospital is a ripe environment for improvement in the types of devices clinicians use, and how they integrate those devices into their workflow.

About Voalte

Voalte is the only company to provide a fully integrated and dependable clinical communication system that healthcare professionals want, enjoy and effectively use. Voalte products are designed to be intuitive, high value, mission critical applications running on the latest generation of touch-based smartphones.

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2. Archives of Internal Medicine. (April 26, 2010). Association of Interruptions with an Increased Risk and Severity of Medication Administration Errors. Johanna I. Westbrook, Ph.D., University of Sydney, Australia, and colleagues.
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About the Survey

Voalte partnered with *American Nurse Today*, the Official Journal of the American Nurses Association, to survey 464 nurse leaders and 658 staff nurses. The total of 1,122 respondents represent nurses working at acute care, pediatric, rehabilitation and specialty hospitals across the United States. For this Special Report, we cited results from 226 nurse leaders and 287 staff nurses at acute care hospitals only. Nursing roles were categorized as follows:

Nurse Leaders

- Executives (CNO, VP, Director, Assistant VP): 10%
- Managers (Nurse Manager, Assistant Nurse Manager, Other Management Role): 31%

Staff Nurses

- Practicing Nurses (Staff Nurse, Assigned Charge Nurse, Rotating Charge Nurse, Other Staff Role): 59%

We conducted the survey in the 1st Quarter of 2013, and used Survey Monkey to gather the responses. The methods to analyze perceptions and relationships among survey items were descriptive statistics using frequencies, percentage and means, all presented in graphical form. Additionally, correlations and chi-square tests were conducted. Statistics Solutions of Clearwater, Florida, conducted the analysis of statistical significance between ranked-ordered and categorical level data, respectively.