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HEALTHCARE
CONSULTING
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Robert Wittwer,
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Professional Services

IMPROVING
WORKFLOWS FOR
BETTER CLINICAL
OUTCOMES

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\$15

COVER STORY

HB Healthcare Business Review **TOP 20**
HEALTHCARE
CONSULTING COMPANIES - 2023

By Alex D'souza

U.S. healthcare facilities do an amazing job of providing the best possible care in their critical care units. Among the most expensive care areas in the enterprise, intensive care units (ICUs) have received the bulk of technology investment, historically speaking. As such, digital transformation initiatives are top-of-mind in efforts to drive both clinical and cost efficiencies. However, we've reached the point of diminishing returns where incremental efficiencies no longer outpace investment. The proverbial "bang for the buck" is on the decline. Savvy hospital executives are beginning to explore care areas, previously characterized as cost centers, for investment opportunities that will generate returns around patient outcomes, patient experience and caregiver experience, as well as cost reductions. One of the care areas where these investments are paying huge dividends along the patient journey is in medical-surgical (med-surg) nursing units.

To put this into perspective, consider a post-operative patient who is connected to a continuous SpO₂ monitor at the bedside and is also getting periodic vital sign checks from a mobile monitor on a roll stand. Integration and automation of these disparate devices and workflows often doesn't exist, requiring a large degree of manual tasks that

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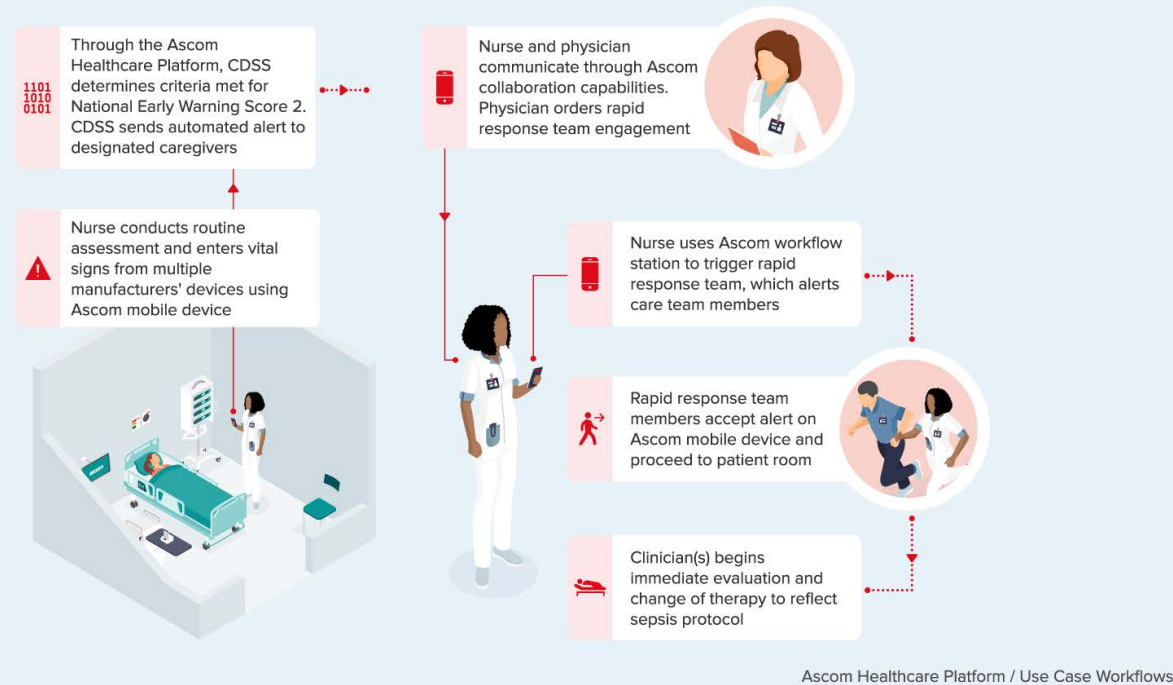
AS CLINICIANS AND EXPERTS IN THIS AREA, WE ARE ON A MISSION TO BRIDGE THE GAPS IN CLINICAL COMMUNICATION AND CARE COORDINATION BY COMPLEMENTING HOW CAREGIVERS OPERATE TODAY

**IMPROVING
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OUTCOMES**

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Response teams' management

Leveraging Clinical Decision Support (CDSS) for unexpected deterioration of a patient



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distract from patient care and inject latency into the availability of patient data. Such distractions, delays and administrative burdens open the door to a host of clinical issues, such as treatment gaps, caregiver burnout and adverse events where a direct correlation can be made to poor outcomes and quality of care.

In this scenario, an incremental investment in technology has the potential to exponentially impact care delivery on many levels. For example, automating patient data from the point of care to the medical record improves the availability of information for care treatment decisions and reduces the caregiver burden around manual tasks. Couple this with clinical decision support analytics (CDSS) or custom electronic medical record (EMR)-based algorithms and now you're proactively monitoring for patient deterioration and preventing this subtle decline that can go unrecognized under non-automated workflows. For good measure, wrap alarm management and/or vendor agnostic central surveillance into a solution, and you're really cooking with gas for proactive versus reactive clinical response, actionable insights, collaboration, patient-to-caregiver optimization and caregiver satisfaction, to name a few.

Ascom, a global healthcare leader in information and communication technologies (ICT), is working closely with healthcare facilities in breaking the barriers to redesigning clinical workflows. As a trusted advisor, Ascom recognizes how clinical workflows vary from facility to facility within an integrated delivery network (IDN) or even from unit to unit within the same facility. Before any automation can be applied, Ascom ensures foundational elements like mapping clinical workflows and standardizing care delivery processes are completed.

"As clinicians and experts in this area, we are on a mission to bridge the gaps in clinical communication and care coordination by complementing how caregivers operate today," says Robert Wittwer, Senior Vice President, Professional Services at Ascom Americas.

Ascom stays true to this goal by not only taking a patient-centric approach, but also building upon a vendor-agnostic platform that protects a healthcare provider's investment in clinical hardware and collaboratively designs future state workflows with clinician burnout and turnover reductions in mind.

Interoperability And Vendor Neutrality, At Its Finest

System interoperability is an ethos of Ascom's solution set. The company has many solutions that cater to every facet of care delivery, from the bedside to the medical record. These include teleCARE IP® -a cost-effective nurse call; alert and wander management solution for long-term care facilities; Telligence®-a comprehensive nurse call system for acute care facilities; Digistat®-a software suite that leverages device integration tools; continuous custom clinical analytics and workflow automation and Unite®-a robust; fully-featured; vendor agnostic application that delivers alarm management capabilities across the enterprise.

The company also offers caregiver mobility devices in the way of Android-based smartphones that use government-based cybersecurity standards for secure, enterprise communications, as well as the ability to visualize patient data near real-time, in the palm of the caregiver.

"Simply put, we consume disparate sources of clinical data and bring it into our secure applications. We parse it, analyze it,

prioritize it and escalate it according to our customers clinical workflow design, enabling caregivers with information that optimizes care delivery and improves patient outcomes, notes Michael Augusti, Head Of Healthcare Alliances at Ascom Americas. "Additionally, we support our customers in using their own data, whether it's simply to have it land in the EMR for documentation purposes or whether it's in support of interdisciplinary teams during the course of on-going research to improve patient care."

Before recommending a solution or workflow modification, Ascom's Professional Services organization considers the human element inherent in the work environment. Ascom's clinical team spends significant time upfront to understand a provider's workflows. Based on the insights, they suggest solutions and customize implementations to improve care delivery. This caregiver-centric approach ensures the changes to workflows are readily adoptable; after all, adoption by nurses and staff is paramount in creating a highly collaborative environment.

Ascom believes in vendor neutrality in helping achieve the quadruple aim of today's healthcare providers for better patient outcomes, improved patient and nurse satisfaction and reduced costs. Working seamlessly with other manufacturer devices allows Ascom solutions to fit into facilities' allocated budgets at a particular time for a strong return-on-investment. For example, during mergers and acquisitions, hospitals might have IDNs standardized with different manufacturers from a patient monitoring standpoint. Due to its strategic partnerships with national-level vendors in patient monitoring, Ascom's software can connect with any solution, regardless of the vendor, which serves as a competitive differentiator for the company.

"We are manufacturer-agnostic. The primary aim of our consultative service is to drive higher operational efficiency by integrating different devices, whether pumps or ventilators, ensuring the alarms from those devices are reaching the correct staff," says Wittwer. "We help clients navigate business-critical decisions regarding adding or repurposing existing technical capabilities to enable a better workflow that matches their environments and needs."

Bringing Centralized Surveillance Outside The ICU

With foundations predicated on client-centricity, Ascom strives to maximize the efficacy of existing systems outside the ICU through centralized surveillance. Big-ticket investment technologies and systems are ubiquitous inside ICU units, and centralized surveillance systems are essential to address a code status. Ascom can deliver the same capabilities outside the ICU to other essential units like the med-surg floors. It holds a robust solution with the ability

to monitor upward of a thousand patients across multiple clinical departments and facilities while ensuring each patient receives proper care from the appropriate caregiver at the correct time.

"We can set up centralized surveillance at a nurse station or in a clinical operations center to give caregivers a bird's-eye view over the entire patient population and visualize what's going on across a clinical unit or even the enterprise,"

says Augusti.

"In addition, our solution is compatible with custom scoring algorithms, or standard algorithms, like early warning scoring, being used by most healthcare providers in some capacity, to drive reductions in codes, length of stay and ICU bounceback," adds Wittwer.

A recent success story involving a care facility struggling to improve caregiver response times highlights the value Ascom brings to the table. As an Ascom partner, the client witnessed more responsive workflows

which translated into improved outcomes and reduced costs in care delivery. The facility realized code reductions and reductions in ICU bouncebacks when it targeted these as key performance indicators in the configuration and rollout of the solution.



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Pioneering Technology For Time-Sensitive Environments

Ascom's Professional Services team consists of experienced clinicians, including nurses and respiratory therapists, as well as engineers and project managers to ensure implementations meet stated objectives. This will be important as the rate of technology adoption is on the rise in healthcare. Rather than having to pull data, there are increasing efforts to push data into the hands of caregivers at the bedside, and Ascom is well positioned to provide "last-mile" technologies in support of such efforts. As med-surg floors become acuity adaptable, technology-enabled care will allow hospital administrators to use their resources most efficiently. This means enabling nurses to practice at the top of their license and better equipping them to provide proactive care to more patients with increasing co-morbidities.