



the Ascom Report

Extending the reach of actionable insights for healthcare leaders.

Quiet, please.

There's no better time to address two pressing issues that impact patient satisfaction and desensitize caregivers: noise from alarms and overhead paging.

"I know one of the things we're suffering from is notification fatigue, - too many alarms, and caregivers are certainly overwhelmed with too many interruptions."

"That alarm goes off in the patient room forever, and that's a patient dissatisfier."

"Lack of task coordination leads to inefficient workflows, too many alarms, and then low patient satisfaction."

- Participants in Ascom's Clinical Leadership Focus Group

The last ten years extensive, rapid changes for hospitals in the US and Canada. EHR, HIPAA privacy, patient satisfaction, new care delivery models and population health are just some of the challenges that hospitals were forced to address.

Making progress in some areas has required making tradeoffs among technological and clinical priorities. As a result, some improvements that are relatively simple to implement – but can have a significant impact on patient and caregiver experience – have fallen by the wayside.

Two of these potential improvements – improving quietness and reducing caregiver alarm fatigue – are closely related, and a solution is within reach. Nevertheless, as comments from Ascom's focus group indicate, many hospitals continue to struggle with these issues. This is not surprising given the wide array of clinical and technological challenges that hospitals face.

At the same time, though, this plethora of challenges calls for hospitals to look for leverage points and simple technology improvements that can address multiple issues at once.



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The Quietness Conundrum

“High levels of noise negatively affect all patients. Excess noise and interruptions of sleep slow the recovery process, increase stress, decrease cognitive function, and negatively impact a patient’s perception of their well-being.”

– Julia Greer, Director of Clinical Strategy, Ascom Americas

Hospital noise remains an ongoing problem that negatively impacts the patient experience at many hospitals, because quietness at night can have a direct impact on quality of sleep. This in turn can negatively impact patient recovery.

In the most recent US HCAHPS patient satisfaction tracking, quietness is the second-lowest rated component attribute. Poor quietness ratings have plagued hospitals for years. While HCAHPS ratings have generally improved, improvements in

quietness ratings are slight – just a four percent increase in top-box ratings since the beginning of the decade.

HCAHPS Patient Satisfaction Top-Box Scores

HCAHPS Measure	Top-Box Percent
Recovery Info	87%
Doctor Communication	81%
Nurse Communication	80%
Room Cleanliness	75%
Responsiveness	69%
Explained Medicines	66%
Quietness	61%
Understood Care	53%

Top-box score represents the percentage of patient respondents who chose the most positive response for each question.

Noise has many causes, some of which can be addressed through relatively simple steps like awareness-building, procedural updates or regular maintenance. Examples include managing voice

levels, not restocking supplies while patients try to sleep, and repairing squeaky carts or doors.

Obviously, addressing the noise from overhead paging or alarms is much more complicated – but usually not prohibitively so. Moreover, as we will see, taking a strategic approach to quietness can reduce alarm fatigue in the process, which can lead to better coordination of tasks.

The “Cry Wolf” Syndrome

“Clinical alarms are designed to alert clinicians to changes in their patients’ conditions, but the sheer numbers and resulting noise instead pose a significant threat to patient safety.”

– The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, 2018

It is well established that the vast majority of alarms – up to 90 percent – are false. This results in a “cry wolf” syndrome, in which clinicians become desensitized when exposed to an excessive number of alarms.

Creating a Quieter, More Productive Care Environment

Imagine a clinical environment where instead of disruptive general alerts, patient calls and other messages go directly and discreetly to caregivers' mobile devices. Caregivers gain more time for face-to-face care. Walking distances are reduced. Patients feel less isolated and free to communicate person-to-person with their assigned caregiver.

A focused effort to reduce noise and alarm fatigue can yield all these benefits when that effort is supported with:

- Purpose-built smart devices, such as the Ascom Myco™ 3, provide clinicians with timely access to this information— and help to streamline care coordination, care responses, and care delivery
- An integrated communication and collaboration platform (MH Cure, integrated with Ascom solutions) facilitates mobile workflows to improve clinical team efficiency
- Device-neutral data management software (such as Ascom Digistat) acquires information about clinical data, alarms and events in near-real-time from medical devices
- An implementation plan that includes clinical and IT leaders when planning develops a process of filtering and prioritizing alarms

These solutions can have significant, positive impacts on the caregiver and patient experience. For example, nurses at one Ascom customer hospital reported:

- A 40% increase in satisfaction with the ability to communicate effectively
- 43% of staff believed that the use of overhead paging was drastically reduced
- 46% of staff stated that the number of steps they take in a day was reduced

In another recent study, designed in response to the increasing prevalence of Central Monitoring Units (CMUs) in acute care facilities, alarm notification messages were reduced by 58% through a combination of the GE Carescape® patient monitoring system, the Ascom Mobile Monitoring Gateway (MMG), and delayed alarm filtering of non-clinical alarms.

A New Decade Brings New Opportunities to Improve Care and Patient Experience

The last decade has proven to be one of the most eventful and demanding in the history of healthcare, and hospitals continue to make amazing progress in tackling new and complex challenges. While there are no simple solutions, leaders must take advantage of opportunities to create leverage points in which multiple problems can be solved simultaneously. A focused effort on noise reduction can be leveraged to reduce alarm fatigue, enhance communications between caregivers, capture and coordinate information from medical devices, and enhance caregiver productivity.

For more information on how Ascom can help your hospital, contact AscomMarketing@ascom.com.



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A quarterly report for hospital leaders, focused on breaking down silos, integrating systems, orchestrating workflows and enabling caregivers.

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About Ascom

Ascom is a global solutions provider focused on healthcare ICT and mobile workflow solutions. The vision of Ascom is to close digital information gaps allowing for the best possible decisions – anytime and anywhere. Ascom's mission is to provide mission-critical, real-time solutions for highly mobile, ad hoc, and time-sensitive environments. Ascom uses its unique product and solutions portfolio and software architecture capabilities to devise integration and mobilization solutions that provide truly smooth, complete, and efficient workflows for healthcare as well as for industry and retail sectors.

Ascom is headquartered in Baar (Switzerland), has operating businesses in 18 countries and employs around 1,300 people worldwide. Ascom registered shares (ASCN) are listed on the SIX Swiss Exchange in Zurich.

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