

New Nurse-call System Means Faster Patient Service

Installation began in April, to be completed by summer 2005

By Nicole Aguilar
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A new \$3.5 million nurse-call system will make it easier and faster for patients to reach their nurses in all Harris County Hospital District hospitals and health centers.

The system reduces a nurse's response to patient calls, improving patient care and staff efficiency. The 14-month HCHD-wide installation began in April at Baytown Health Center and Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital.

It integrates the nurse-call system with the internal wireless paging system so a patient simply presses a call button at his or her bedside. Within seconds, a page is delivered to the assigned nurse. The system also uses a visual signal by igniting a corridor dome light above a patient's door.

A touch screen console at the nursing station will display pending patient calls, service requests and the length of time a patient has waited.

"Our current nurse-call system was implemented 12 to 15 years ago and is not nearly as advanced," said Michael Staley, Bio-Med Administrative Director. "This will definitely improve the quality of care for patients."

The traditional system requires a patient to push a button near the bed to alert the unit desk. Station staff finds the appropriate nurse.

Now, nurses will be able to respond faster to patients because calls go directly to the nurses' pagers, no matter where they are.

"This new system will help us tremendously," said Carolyn Hardeman, LBJ Hospital Nurse Manager of Unit 3-B. "The system will be especially helpful in tracking the time it took for nurses to get to their patients, therefore improving patient satisfaction."

The system also keeps track of the nurses assigned to a particular room in the unit.

The network can be used to quietly electronically page a Code Blue team (a group of emergency responders ranging from surgeons to respiratory therapists) for a medical emergency instead of announcing it on the public address system.

"This is leading-edge technology," said David Attard, Bio-Med Project Manager. "It has endless capabilities. In the future, wireless phones can be added so nurses can talk directly to their patients and nurses will be paged automatically if equipment alarms go off."

The current procedure of listing patients' conditions and healthcare providers on a whiteboard will give way to a more efficient electronic system. Staff will be able to input and access patient notes from any networked computer.

Photo one:

David Acevedo gets instructions from Hardeman on how to reach her through the new nurse-call system.

Photo two:

One touch is all it takes to get nursing assistance.