



Alistair Hookway

Wireless first solutions transcend security for healthcare facilities

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Wireless-first solutions enhance security and operations for healthcare facilities, writes Andrew Griffey, Senior Product Manager at Inovonics (<https://www.inovonics.com/>).

Article Chapters



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Healthcare should be available to everyone who needs it when they need it. This is especially true for emergency services, which require facilities to always be openly accessible.

Unfortunately, hospitals and clinics that provide such necessary services are soft targets for criminals and often subject to acts of violence from the very people they are trying to help.

The statistics are both revealing and alarming.

According to the American Hospital Association, violence in healthcare settings has increased significantly over the past decade.

In the US, up to 76% of health care workers have reported experiencing violence, including verbal violence, threats and physical assault.

The AHA also estimates that workplace and community violence cost US hospitals \$18.27 billion in 2023.

Protecting patients, visitors, staff and emergency responders is a monumental task for security providers in the healthcare space.

Aside from the primary concern for personal safety, incidents of violence and theft hinder operations, directly affecting patient care.

It's quite clear that the symptoms are severe and the system is in need of a cure.

Not more, but better security is needed

The fast and easy solution that usually surfaces first is to spend more on additional security measures, but adding more of the same whether electronic systems or guard services is not necessarily the answer.

The key is to add better solutions that may even lead to reductions in costs and long-term overhead.

However, the challenges are many. Aside from trying to maintain open environments and accessibility 24/7, hospitals and healthcare facilities typically cover a lot of ground, from external parking and off-loading areas to a maze of internal departments and areas containing everything from expensive diagnostic and treatment devices to babies in maternity wards to controlled substances.

Many hospitals across the country are also aging facilities with legacy infrastructure across complex interior layouts constructed with heavy materials, all of which makes security upgrades even more challenging.

By their inherent nature, hospitals and healthcare (<https://securityjournalamericas.com/category/industry-sectors/healthcare/>) facilities are high-stress environments where every second counts.

This is true for both providing healthcare services and responding to emergencies.

Fast response times can often help prevent medical and threatening events from happening or escalating further, delivering positive outcomes across different but equally important types of incidents.

The obvious security solutions are not necessarily the best. Placing more guard personnel throughout an already complex facility can be more problematic and expensive to manage, and installing more electronic devices on legacy network infrastructure can be cost-prohibitive and largely ineffective.

Ideally, hospitals and healthcare facilities require a new, modern solution that prioritizes reliable operation, extends coverage and provides ease of use across the entire facility.

Making wireless-first security, the first (and best) choice

There's a long list of technologies that can be deployed to better secure hospitals and healthcare facilities, but the fastest trending is wireless-first technology.

Transitioning from wired to new modern wireless security infrastructure provides more economical and effective ways to extend the scale, reach and effectiveness of security system deployments faster and with greater cost efficiency.

Eliminating the need for long cable runs from independent distribution frame (IDF) closets to endpoint devices located throughout hospitals and healthcare facilities saves time and money during installation and over the course of the system's lifetime.

As the scale and complexity of an installation increases, so do the economies of scale for wireless-first solutions.

This results in even greater return on investment (ROI) and lower total cost of ownership (TCO) over time.

Intelligent sensors make sense

Hospitals and healthcare facilities can deploy a wide selection of sensors that transcend traditional intrusion detection to monitor and gather data on environmental conditions, occupancy levels, motion detection, traffic monitoring, smoke/CO detection and more.

These sensors can also be integrated into traditional intrusion, access, or video management platforms to initiate specific system functions when events are triggered.

For example, an event can initiate full-frame video recording by the VMS, a lockdown via the access control system, fire alarm activation if high levels of CO or smoke/heat are detected and numerous building automation events including HVAC activation, lighting management and even elevator control.

Additionally, wireless infrastructure is well-suited to supporting modern wearable panic notification devices with location services to pinpoint where an event is taking place.

These new wearable devices are perfect for hospital personnel who are constantly on the move in large facilities.

New wireless-first platforms also adapt well to changes, allowing hospitals and healthcare security management to easily accommodate changes in floor plans, and scale to accommodate expansion.

This holds true even when deployed at large healthcare campuses and older facilities that often present installation and operational challenges caused by thick walls, dense materials, long distances and complex layouts.

Modern wireless-first infrastructure also provides the added convenience of remote, mobile control, allowing system admins to manage, monitor and respond to system activity from anywhere using an app on their smartphones.

All these value propositions are not collectively possible at hospitals and healthcare facilities with conventional wired infrastructure.

Proven performance you can trust

If there is a single application where performance matters most, it is hospitals and healthcare facilities.

New wireless-first platforms deliver proven reliability and resilience using 900MHz security technology, which has proven to be both highly secure and exceptionally reliable.

Already in use at thousands of mission-critical deployments, 900MHz wireless technology is widely recognized as the industry standard for commercial security systems and critical infrastructure.

And it only keeps getting better when integrated into the cloud and supported by more advanced endpoint devices.

Prognosis

Hospitals and healthcare facilities that make the transition from wired to wireless-first security infrastructure will immediately benefit from the performance, reliability and versatility these solutions deliver.

They also allow fast and easy integration of new and emerging sensors and edge devices to expand the overall capabilities of existing security system platforms with centralized, remote management and control and the highest levels of performance and integrity.

Equally significant is the impact wireless-first infrastructure solutions will have on hospital and healthcare facility operations, including response times, user confidence and comfort, improved coordination during events and reduced exposure to liabilities through compliance reinforcement.

Together, these value propositions help make hospital and healthcare facilities more secure, efficient and conducive to healing.