

Case study

Virtual care, **real results**

How Henry Ford Health is transforming patient care across its enterprise

Henry Ford Health is taking virtual care from an as-needed feature to a critical aspect of its enterprise strategy.

Led by the organization's chief nursing officer and chief nursing informatics officer, Michigan-based Henry Ford Health implemented a pilot of virtual nursing acute care in 2024, with additional implementations planned throughout 2025 and the larger goal of having it available for all acute care beds across its 13 hospitals.

Partnering with care.ai and SONIFI[®] Health, Henry Ford Health is already seeing positive results toward their goals of:

- Transforming bedside nursing care with virtual support
- Improving patient care and quality outcomes
- Increasing HCAHPS and patient satisfaction scores
- Creating cost savings with operations and safety improvements

**HENRY
FORD
HEALTH**

Organization overview

13

Acute care
hospitals

550

Site locations

50K

Employees

Virtual care pilot*

To start, Henry Ford Health focused on how virtual care could bring the most value to the hospital's bedside nurses.

First launching with 22 beds, then expanding to 44, the pilot included virtual nurses taking over the majority of admissions, rounding and discharge tasks without reducing bedside nurse staffing.

44

beds with virtual acute care system integrated with the in-room interactive TV

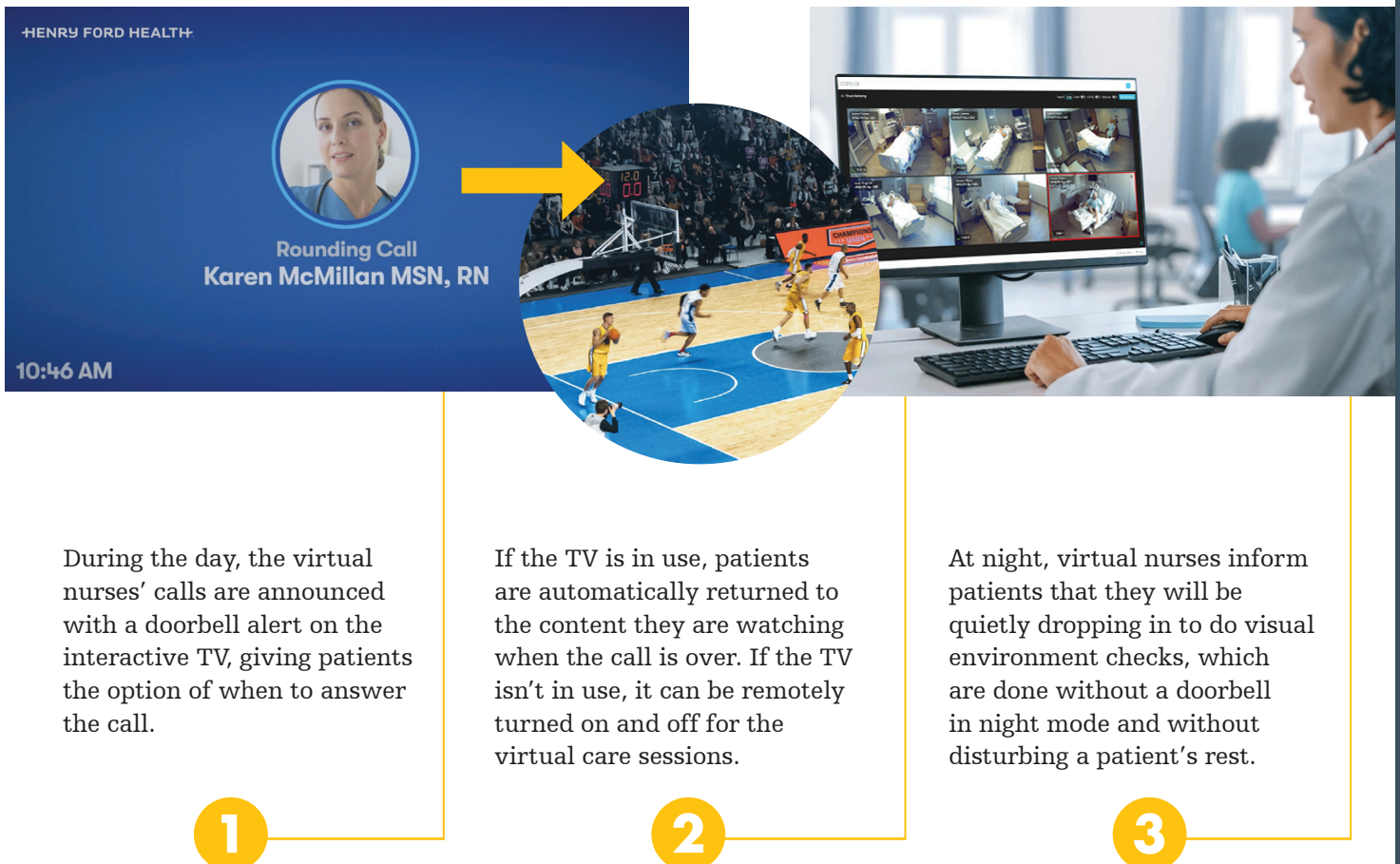
310

virtual nurse calls per week

6

virtual nurse interactions per patient stay

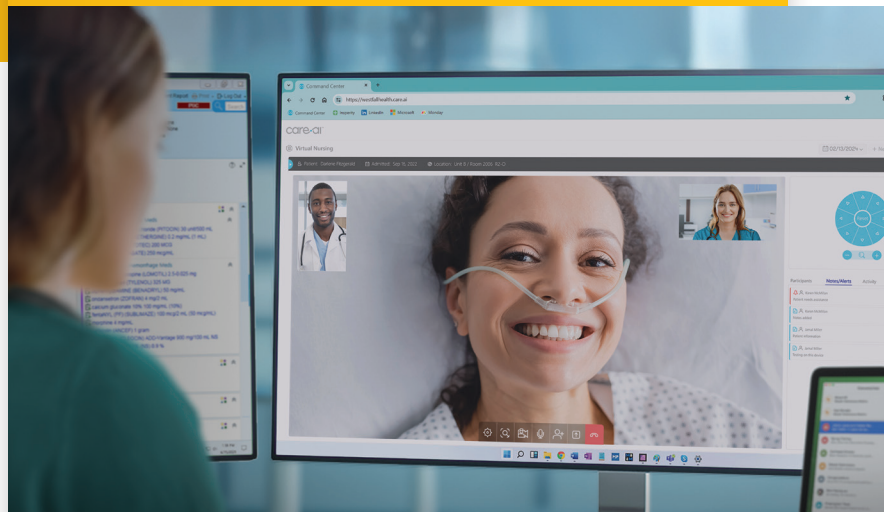
*Data averages over a 6-month period



Feedback from staff has been overwhelmingly positive. Virtual rounds have found “good catches” for safety interventions, admits and discharges are streamlined, and nurses on the floor have been extremely happy with the process.

Any concerns about patient reluctance of the new system haven’t been realized. The pilot has seen adoption across all age groups of patients, with enthusiasm for the extra level of care they feel the virtual nursing team provides.

Leaders say they’re already seeing survey scores like “likelihood to recommend” and “nursing communications” going up.



Patients don't care that we're more efficient with admits and discharges, they care that someone is taking care of them.

- Henry Ford Health CNIO

Henry Ford's virtual care use cases

Admit/discharge

Rounding

Safety checks

Nurse mentor

Tele-sitting

Pilot project

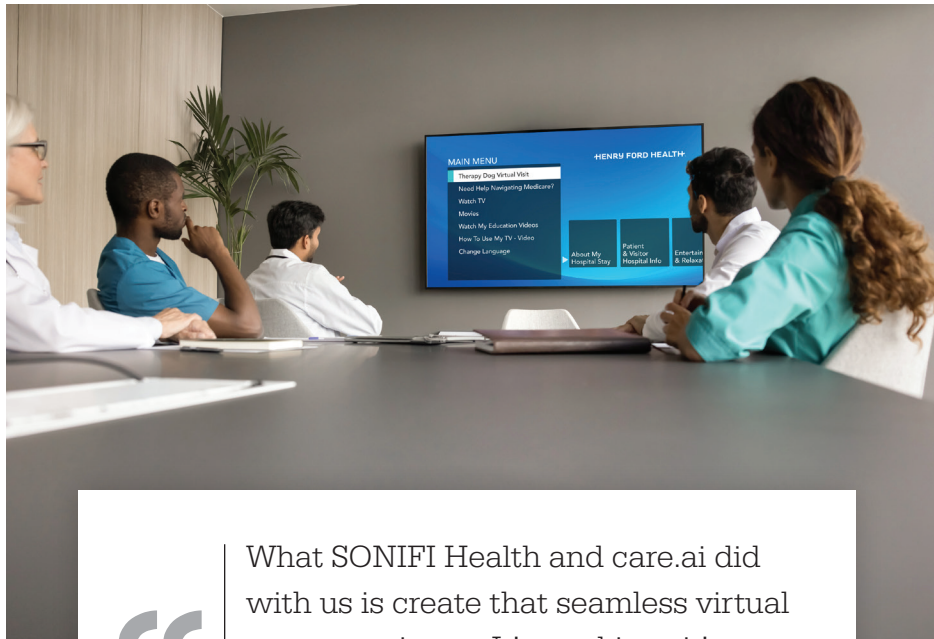
Future implementations

- Remote physician consults to avoid hospital transfers for specialists
- Education to prevent readmissions (hand hygiene, pre-op, population health, etc.)
- Virtual case management
- Pharmacy consults for medication safety
- Nurse mentoring and bedside procedure witnessing
- Video education triggers, comprehension checks and teach-backs with the interactive TV
- AI assistance addressing falls and pressure injury protocols

Henry Ford Health’s CNIO says care.ai’s willingness to work with SONIFI Health’s interactive system was vital to the project, building on the numerous system and workflow integrations SONIFI Health has established during their longstanding relationship with Henry Ford Health.

SONIFI Health and care.ai collaborated on creating a virtual care solution that fit Henry Ford Health’s goals, with the versatility for added use cases and flexibility for growth and evolution.

The collaboration between Henry Ford Health, care.ai (now part of Stryker) and SONIFI Health is poised to be a model for what enterprise virtual acute care can be.



What SONIFI Health and care.ai did with us is create that seamless virtual care experience. It’s working—it’s a beautiful thing.

– **Henry Ford Health CNIO**

Next steps for virtual care at Henry Ford Health



Implement

across Henry Ford Health’s five legacy acute care hospitals
(2,200+ beds)



Incorporate

into eight hospitals that are part of its Ascension Michigan joint venture



Continue

in test lab for \$2.5B expansion on main Detroit campus
(opening 2029)



Refine

strategies and models for use in ambulatory settings

Choose partners, not pieces

Virtual care isn't as easy as adding a camera to the room.

It's a fundamental shift in the patient care model.

For long-term success, it takes more than selecting equipment; **you need to find a partner to back up your vision.**

For Henry Ford Health, this meant:

Insisting on a hardwired system

Working solely on Wi-Fi for direct and critical patient care posed too many reliability and security risks.

Using existing technology in the room

Some virtual care vendors claim a dedicated display is needed for their solution. However, Henry Ford Health's patient rooms already have SONIFI Health's interactive TVs installed, and real estate (and budget) was too tight to add superfluous hardware to the space.

Selecting cameras with specific capabilities

Not all cameras are created equal. Henry Ford Health selected care.ai sensors with technology that would let nurses do visual check-ins without needing a light (so night rounds wouldn't wake up patients) and that automatically pointed the lens toward the ceiling when not in use (so patients knew their privacy was being protected).

Making it simple

They didn't want to put any additional burden on bedside nurses or need patients to do anything for virtual care to work; virtual staff would manage and control the interactions from start to finish.





Creating a seamless experience

Staff are already in Epic to reference and update patient information. Patients are often using the SONIFI Health interactive TV in the room for entertainment, education and care information. The new virtual care system needed to integrate with both, for a process that makes sense and makes everyone happy.

Start small

Remember the pilot is to really evaluate the use of the technology; full ROI happens with the ability to scale for greater impact.

Start with a very focused use case scope so the tasks for your staff are clear.

For Henry Ford Health, this meant only including admissions, rounding and discharges with their virtual nursing pilot. The rest of the staff's existing workflows remained the same for minimal disruption to patient care while trialing these changes.

Pick a small pilot unit in existing facilities or a test environment in new construction to work through all the variables that come with new technology.

This gives you the chance to make sure connections, integrations and equipment work properly before installing in a wider setting.

Henry Ford Health selected the care.ai SmartCare Platform to meet all of their immediate virtual care needs and for their continued partnership on ideas and concepts into the future.

Factors to consider and scale with new technology implementations

- Building infrastructure
- System integrations
- Staffing models and workflows
- Appropriate use cases/scope
- Ongoing technical support
- ROI and value assessments

Listen to users

Any technology you add to your hospital should work for your staff, not the other way around. Virtual care is no different.

With the scope of testing how virtual acute care could work for patient admissions, nurse rounding and discharge preparations, Henry Ford Health had their bedside nurses rotate through as the virtual nurses throughout the pilot.

This gave a chance for nurses to give their insight about the virtual acute care technology from both frontline and virtual perspectives.

“Was it easy to use? Was anything stressful?
What needs more tinkering?”

“What makes sense to do virtually?
What needs to stay in person?”

“What questions did patients have?
Was anyone hesitant about using it?”

Talk to the people using the technology—they’ll be honest, they’ll be right, and they’ll be the ones to make it successful.

Think long-term

After the pilot project, take technical and operational lessons learned and decide how to scale them, whether it’s to other units in a single facility or to multiple sites across an enterprise.

Virtual workforce trends, technological capabilities, and patient expectations will continue to evolve every year, so be open to adapting your approach as time goes on.

Having a strong ongoing relationship with your vendors and partners will make sure you never leave your staff or your patients behind.

What’s it worth?

Like every ancillary part of healthcare, determining how you will track virtual care ROI will set up your long-term success and funding.

Work with your technology vendors on what metrics and analytics they can provide to help you demonstrate the ongoing value of your virtual care strategies.

- Staff workflows and workloads
- Nurse and provider efficiencies
- HCAHPS and patient satisfaction
- Quality, safety and operations
- LOS and readmission rates



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