

VCU HEALTH



THE CHALLENGE

Don Smith, operations manager at VCU Health, was faced with a new challenge: managing communications for an international bike race that included 1,000 cyclists from 75 countries and more than 640,000 spectators over nine days. In his 10 years at VCU, he'd faced a number of formidable tasks: implementing a comprehensive contact centre overhaul, transitioning more than 600 doctors onto a secure mobile messaging platform, and coordinating several full-system upgrades. Don and his team were up for almost any undertaking, but this would definitely require an unusual approach.

The city of Richmond was hosting the 2015 UCI Road World Cycling Championships. A qualifier for the Tour de France, it's a major international cycling event, held every year in a different city as selected by the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI). "It's truly a global sporting event," said Smith, who noted that the race was covered by more than 500 international media outlets and broadcast live to a global audience of more than 300 million.

And VCU Health was right in the middle of the action. The medical centre was tapped as the sole healthcare provider for event attendees, including cyclists, media, and thousands of spectators from all over the world. This meant mobile communications for medical centre staff had to be rock solid, even with predicted cellular capacity issues.

"We had to do a lot of worst-case scenario planning," said Smith. "With multiple roads closed, and the main race course running in front of the hospital, we needed to figure out how to make sure all locations, including outpatient clinics, remained fully operational throughout the event, no matter what happened." The VCU Health team turned to their longtime critical communications partner: Spok.

OVERVIEW

VCU Health, which includes Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center, is a comprehensive academic medical enterprise located in the United States. The 865-bed facility encompasses five health sciences schools including dentistry, medicine, nursing, and pharmacy, and offers more than 200 specialty areas such as multidisciplinary centres for cancer, cardiology, neurosurgery and transplantation. U.S. News & World Report ranked the medical centre the No.1 hospital in Virginia for 2015–16.

INDUSTRY

Healthcare

BUSINESS DRIVERS

- Provide efficient, dependable contact centre operations able to handle unusual and unpredictable demands
- Support secure, reliable mobile communications for clinical and event staff at multiple sites
- Speed and optimise response to emergency situations and other critical events

SOLUTION

- Spok® solutions for emergency notification, operator console, on-call rostering, web directory, and secure smartphone messaging

RESULTS

- Zero messages lost and no major injuries during the nine-day event
- Uninterrupted, reliable communications support for medical centre, large network of clinics and event command centre
- Flexible and robust communications infrastructure able to meet unexpected demands



CASE STUDY

THE SOLUTION

With a robust communications infrastructure supporting them and 18 months of meticulous planning, Don and his team were ready for the UCI Road World Cycling Championships. All event staff were required to use Spok Mobile, and event phones were set up with Wireless Priority Service (WPS) via Homeland Security. Don's team provided daily "cheat sheets" for command centre staff with important updates. Spok set up a dedicated support team to provide any needed assistance during the event. Not a single message was lost throughout the entire nine-day race, and all facilities remained operational without interruption. The only incident requiring medical assistance involved a rider who suffered a broken collarbone.

"Our Spok solutions have allowed us to provide a much better patient experience by decreasing call-handling times and streamlining scheduling and clinical communication," said Smith. "We knew we could count on Spok to help us provide first-rate communications for the cycling championships."

And the winner? Although Peter Sagan of Slovakia won the 2015 UCI Road World Cycling Championships with a time of 6:14:37, it was VCU Health and Don Smith's team that provided an outstanding, world-class, and most importantly, safe experience for all race participants, media and spectators.



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SPOK AND VCU HEALTH: A LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP

VCU Health has been collaborating with Spok since 1997, implementing a number of innovative solutions designed to improve care coordination and staff efficiency. The busy contact centre, which annually fields more than 2 million calls and 5.7 million messages, had been their first project. Handling everything from room service to scheduling for 75 outpatient clinics to bed tracking and visitor information, the centre was heavily used. The Spok® console and on-call rostering solutions had achieved notable results over the years: Operator workload had been dramatically reduced as 48 percent of paging traffic moved to the web, resulting in significant cost savings. In addition, all answering services were brought in-house. The intuitive patient information interface was so effective that operator training was reduced from five days to 20 minutes.

VCU Health has periodically upgraded to the latest versions of its Spok solutions to continue to enhance communication efficiency. A group-paging option allowed new code teams to be created and eliminated the need for paper forms during time-critical situations. The introduction of automated reporting further increased staff efficiency by gathering and disseminating useful data on trauma alerts and paging statistics. And when the organisation installed a new fire alarm system, integrating it to Spok generated notable benefits: The improved communications reduced false alarms—a significant expense to the organisation—by 80 percent. In addition, the contact centre upgrades produced a 10-second drop in call-handling time for operators, improving caller assistance to boot. Finally, in 2014, Spok Mobile® was rolled out to hundreds of clinicians as the organisation recognised the need for secure communications and mobile care coordination.