



# Polycom Provides Wireless Voice Capabilities to Toronto General Hospital

Toronto General Hospital medical staff needed emergency assistance in the operating room with a double-lung by-pass patient. Doctors and nurses quickly notified all necessary staff for support by pushing a code button located on the operating room wall.

The alert went out to the response team's Polycom® SpectraLink® 8000 wireless telephones and the required staff responded immediately to the operating room, stabilizing the urgent situation.

Emergencies like this are a daily occurrence in hospitals. And while excellent communications are critical to hospitals, to date, few voice solutions have been able to satisfy the demanding requirements of the health industry. But the telephone system that is streamlining communications among Toronto General Hospital medical staff is nothing short of extraordinary. In just their third day of use at the hospital, Polycom SpectraLink 8000 wireless telephones proved vital.

In healthcare environments, cellular telephones are not an option because of unreliable coverage and their high-power radios can interfere with sensitive medical equipment. Internal wireless networks are a better answer, and within that solution, hospitals also have to take other communication concerns into consideration when choosing the most effective voice communication system. Walkie-talkies and wearable voice communication badges, for instance, fail to provide doctors and nurses with the privacy that is critical to communicating sensitive medical and patient information. SpectraLink 8000 wireless telephones exceed the privacy requirements of the healthcare industry and deliver the features of a sophisticated wired telephone, providing staff with added functionality directly from the handset and allowing staff to communicate throughout the hospital.

## Calling All Hospital Staff

Toronto General Hospital sought not only a wireless voice system that could meet the hospital's stringent communication requirements, but also one that could integrate easily with its existing telecommunication and wireless infrastructure. Bell Canada, serving as a reseller for Canadian distributor Tel-e Technologies, provided Polycom's voice over Wi-Fi solution. The hospital was able to integrate its new SpectraLink 8000 wireless telephones with its

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*Betty Watt, Nurse Manager, Toronto General Hospital*

*“ The new integrated communication system is user-friendly, timely, accurate, and adaptable to meet our changing needs both daily and long term. The entire staff is working more efficiently now.”*

*Betty Watt, Nurse Manager, Toronto General Hospital*

Cisco® Aironet® Wi-Fi access points to converge their wireless voice and data applications onto one network. Advanced telephone features were made available through integration with the hospital's Nortel Networks Meridian 1 PBX. The combined network now gives Toronto General Hospital the option to customize voice and data applications to offer its staff expanded communication capabilities.

The hospital also integrated the SpectraLink 8000 wireless telephones with their Rauland Responder® 4000 nurse call system through a GlobeStar Connexall application. The alert system is then connected to each operating room suite and to the banner boards in the hallways as well as to several 52-inch plasma screens and computer monitors throughout the hallways and control stations located in the operating room. With the SpectraLink 8000 wireless telephones integrated to Toronto General Hospital's nurse call system, nurses respond directly to patient rooms instead of checking into the nurses' station to inquire about patient calls.

“We're finding this a wonderful, easy way to communicate without all the walking,” says Katherine Kohm, manager of Toronto West Hospital Emergency. “This essentially saves nurse staff seven and a half miles of walking daily from the triage area to the in-charge area. We have instant access to doctors without ever having to leave a patient's side.” Today, SpectraLink 8000 wireless telephones are used in Toronto General Hospital's new clinical services building, operating room floor, cardiac program floors and cardiovascular surgery group.

### **A Successful Communications Cure**

Toronto General Hospital staff not only use the 150 wireless handsets to improve response time to urgent medical situations but also to improve overall hospital efficiencies. For instance, physicians use their SpectraLink wireless telephones in the operating room to immediately notify staff that the area is free for cleanup and ready to prepare for the next operation. The hospital estimates that wasted time in operating rooms costs the facility US\$85 a minute—a cost that the SpectraLink wireless telephones drastically reduce. The huge and sensitive undertaking of deploying a new and effective voice communication system is viewed as a success by patients and staff at Toronto General Hospital.

“Coordinating 20 operating rooms, 40 to 50 surgeries, and approximately 150 staff on a daily basis is a challenge,” Watt says. “An efficient, effective communication system is essential to achieving positive patient outcomes and staff satisfaction. And we now have that.”

### **Learn More**

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