

Sutter Health invests in advanced technology to improve quality and safety. Learn about the hospital of the future.

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SUTTER HEALTH TO INVEST IN INNOVATIVE PATIENT SAFETY TECHNOLOGY

Breakthrough technology raises bar on ICU care and medication delivery

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Aug. 13, 2002 – As part of an ongoing commitment to improving quality care and patient safety, the not-for-profit Sutter Health network of hospitals and physicians today announced a \$50 million investment in new advanced technology that promises fundamental changes in hospital ICU care and bedside medication delivery.

While the faces in tomorrow's hospitals will be the same, doctors and nurses will be armed with a brand new set of high-tech tools designed to bring additional layers of expertise and safety to the patients they care for.

Sutter Health's newest initiatives address key goals set by the Leapfrog Group, a national consortium of major employers that is encouraging hospitals to adopt specific practices to improve health care quality and service.

Added Layer of Care in ICUs

Among the new initiatives announced today, Sutter Health will be the first on the West Coast to use technology from Baltimore, MD-based VISICU, Inc., to provide physician specialists with tools that will enable them to keep an even closer eye on critical care patients 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The solution uses telemedicine technology – early warning software with advanced video and electronic monitoring – to connect off-site critical care specialists to ICU patients.

“Sutter hospitals already have stringent quality control guidelines, but these proven technologies will provide us the opportunity to take patient safety to the next level,” said Sutter Health President and Chief Executive Officer Van Johnson. “These high-tech support systems are the future of health care and Sutter Health is proud to be at the forefront,” he said.

In the new wired ICU, vital signs and laboratory data from the sickest hospital patients will be fed to existing on-site doctors and nurse stations as well as to a new, remote, specially equipped electronic ICU (eICU™). The eICU serves as a high-tech and centralized patient safety net with additional, full-time physician specialists and critical care nurses. The additional critical care support team provides another set of watchful eyes, constantly checking early warning indicators for vital sign changes and looking for any sign of trouble. “Medical studies have shown time and again that full-time intensivist coverage for ICU patients can significantly improve patient outcomes,” said Sutter Health Chief Medical Officer Gordon Hunt, M.D.

The challenge has been the nationwide shortage of intensivists. Less than 6,000 intensivists are actively practicing in the U.S. Many communities, especially those in rural areas, do not have access to intensivists at all.

“This innovative technology will enable us to extend intensivist talent to the more than 400 ICU beds throughout our entire hospital network, complementing the high-quality care already provided by existing ICU physicians and nurses,” Dr. Hunt added.

Applying Advanced Technology to Administering Medicines

Hospitals within the Sutter Health network will begin applying advanced technology to administering patient medications at the bedside. A computer bar code on each patient’s identification bracelet will be used to match and monitor the medication ordered by the doctor. Before administering medications, nurses and other caregivers will scan a bar code imprinted on the patient’s armband, and on the medication, using a hand-held device. A bedside computer will then “read” these bar codes into a software application that uses expert databases to provide patient-specific information.

The number of medications has grown 500 percent in the past decade. Today, more than 17,000 trade and generic pharmaceuticals are marketed in North America. This new system helps ensure the right dose of the right medicine is given to the right patient at the

right time. It also alerts the clinician to possible allergies, and look-alike/sound-alike or high-risk drugs.

Sutter Health has selected the Bridge MedPoint™ bar code-enabled point-of-care (BPOC) software system, pioneered by Bridge Medical, Inc., in Solana Beach, Calif. to provide this advanced safety net for patients and nurses.

At the Forefront of Changes in Health Care

The Pacific Business Group on Health (PBGH), a coalition of nearly 50 large California businesses that purchase health care for some three million employees, is leading California's Leapfrog effort to improve the quality and availability of health care. "We applaud Sutter's investment in technology to improve patient safety," said Peter Lee, president and CEO of PBGH. "Research demonstrates that errors can be reduced and lives saved through bold system changes like these. Embarking on these initiatives will not only improve individual patient safety, but also encourage the entire health care industry to accelerate improvements in quality. We hope other hospitals follow Sutter's lead and recognize that investing in quality can pay off both for patients and in reducing costs," said Lee.

Sutter Health's efforts to improve patient safety and clinical outcomes also include formal, coordinated, goal-oriented initiatives to improve patient care. Sutter Health physicians and hospitals have been successful in improving early detection and treatment of breast cancer and in improving the health of patients suffering from congestive heart failure.

Sutter Health is one of the nation's leading not-for-profit networks of community-based health care providers, delivering high-quality care in more than 100 Northern California communities. Sutter is also the regional leader in infant deliveries, neonatology, orthopedics, pediatrics and cancer care services. Sutter Health supports more than two dozen locally-run acute care hospitals and physician organizations, as well as medical research facilities, regionwide home health, hospice and occupational health networks, and long-term care centers. For more information, visit www.sutterhealth.org.

Editor's note: A video news release is available online at:
http://www.prnewswire.com/broadcast/10057/10057_consumer.html