

PeaceHealth - St. Joseph Hospital

Bellingham, WA



Bringing Two Halves of the Whole Together with Versus RTLS

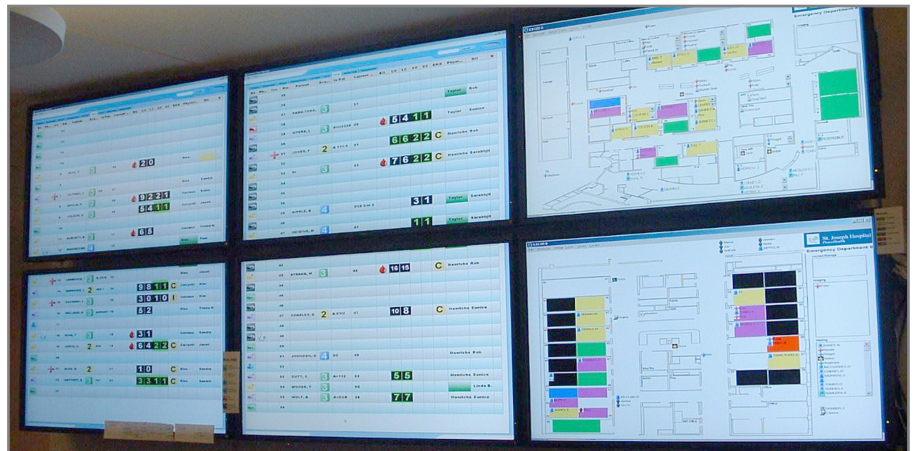
PeaceHealth is a healthcare system serving southern Alaska, Washington and Oregon. In early 2006, PeaceHealth sought a system to help locate key resources more efficiently. Following a successful pilot of the Versus dual infrared and radio frequency tracking system at Sacred Heart Medical Center in Eugene, OR, Versus was selected as the designated provider of location-related solutions to all PeaceHealth facilities. Today, the Versus location information system is installed in five PeaceHealth facilities (three hospitals and two specialty clinics).

St. Joseph Hospital, Bellingham, WA

St. Joseph Hospital is a 235-bed facility, split between two campuses. St. Joseph's provides a full range of inpatient and outpatient services. A Level III Trauma Center, St. Joseph's Emergency Department sees 60,000 patients annually and keeps track of them all with the Versus location and automation solution.

Installation Highlights:

- Patient tracking between two physically separated EDs
- Tracking 60,000 patients annually
- Virtually eliminated phone calls and walking surveys to determine room and patient status
- Everyone benefits!
 - Nurses
 - Physicians
 - Medics
 - Social Workers
 - Chaplains
 - Volunteers
 - Patients



Versus Communication Boards in St. Joseph's ED

With a Remodel in Mind

Prior to ED expansion and implementation of the Versus system, St. Joseph Hospital had one ED with a central nurses' station. Deb Brown, Regional Analyst at St. Joseph's recalls, "Everybody congregated in that nurses' station. It was crowded and noisy." Though there were a few private rooms, patients primarily shared rooms. Even then, due to a couple of hallways, not every room was visible from the central nurses' station. The nurse would have to leave the station in order to determine room status and patient location. If a patient wasn't in a room, she didn't know if, for example, the patient had been sent to imaging or if the room was ready for turnover until she returned to the nurses' station.

The remodel at St. Joseph Hospital created a new, physically separate ED which would be used alongside the old ED. However, there's still a central nurses' station with hallways that are not visible. Having seen the difference that the Versus locating system made at their sister facility, Sacred Heart Medical Center, Brown knew that the same system would be exceptionally beneficial to staff at St. Joseph Hospital, especially with the split ED. "When you have a busy ED, it really helps to have one person who has the overall big picture. For us, that is the Nurse Team Lead. If she is located in one area, she has to have her finger on what is going on in that other area so that she knows where to admit patients. I knew having the location of patients and equipment at hand and actually being able to trust the data would make the lives of the ED staff easier." Brown adds, "The idea of reducing phone calls was also very appealing because there were so many phone calls and overhead pages in our old ED. It was a very noisy place."



Patient badges at St. Joseph's are easily identified by these 'disks' which explain the badge's function and include a return address, if found.

The Versus Solution at St. Joseph Hospital

St. Joseph Hospital went live with the Versus system about a week after opening the new, expanded ED. The Versus system allows St. Joseph's staff to automatically locate patients, staff and equipment throughout the ED. Upon registration, patients receive badges which remain with the patient throughout the visit. By wearing the badge, when the patient walks into an exam room, that room is automatically assigned to the patient. The patient's location and the status of the room are each displayed on central LCD communication boards and individual workstations. In

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“What a Blessing the Versus System is to Chaplains!”

Much of my work is in support of ED staff and physicians when they are going through difficult personal or professional crises of their own. Before Versus, I used to wander through the ED, casually looking for an employee that I knew may need some extra support. Now, I just look up on the screen and I can quickly see where they are and wait discreetly nearby until they are free. Interestingly, the reverse is also true: it is much easier for ED staff and physicians to see where I am at and share their concerns with me in a discreet manner. Prior to Versus, they would have never taken the time or suffered the attention drawn from searching for their chaplain. Thank you, Versus, for making my job much easier.”

— Chaplain Dick Cathell, Ph.D., BCC
St. Joseph Hospital, PeaceHealth

this way, the Nurse Team Lead can monitor room status without leaving the nurses' station—no phone calls, no walking surveys, no paging. “It really made a big difference and it still does,” Brown says. “Plus—our ED is so quiet! It's amazing. That alone made it worth it.”

There were very few process changes in order to implement the Versus solution. Those that were altered are now better. For example, within the Versus software, triage nurses can reserve rooms. This is a function that the Nurse Team Lead can override either by sending a patient to a room or through a manual override. It's useful, because it's a simple way to indicate need and patient volume.

Unexpectedly, some of the key beneficiaries are the medics, social workers and even the chaplains. St. Joseph's staff can now assign rooms before the medics arrive. Room assignments are then displayed in Versus' software on a big “medic board” and serves as an important communication tool to direct the medics to the appropriate patient room. Social workers are also able to easily locate the patients they need to visit. In the future, St. Joseph Hospital would like to add an icon to the Versus board as a way to “flag” a patient requiring a visit from a social worker and automate those visit milestones. In addition, the chaplains at St. Joseph Hospital are very pleased with the Versus system as it allows them to easily and discreetly find not only patients, but also staff who may require additional support.

“The most remarkable thing about this implementation was how much of a non-event the switch-over actually was,” says Donna Woelfel, Clinical Applications Manager. A few staff members complained about how bright the LCD monitors are, but they recognize that without the system, they wouldn't know where their patients are and they'd have trouble finding one another. “Everyone depends on it,” Woelfel says. “They would object if we tried to take it away.” The Versus Communication Board is placed in clinical areas so that both EDs can be viewed simultaneously, enhancing patient flow and increasing staff communication on patient census and visit milestones.

Board Envy

Versus displays and automatically updates patient locations and room assignments, acuity levels, and lab and x-ray orders. It also allows caregivers to automatically “claim” patients, helping caregivers to easily identify the responsible caregiver. This information is ubiquitously

available to all who need to know. “At first,” Brown says, “staff didn't believe that this automatically collected data could possibly be correct or more efficient than taking the time to write in the data on our manual whiteboards, so we left the old whiteboard there for use during the transition.” The Versus system was accurate though, and pretty soon staff were looking at the Versus Communication Board to update the old whiteboard. Brown adds, “That old whiteboard was gone two weeks after Go-Live.”

In addition to the Versus viewing screens, wait time alerts (with timers based on acuity level) help ensure timely visits and patient satisfaction. In fact, Versus includes a visual “timer” for each patient to indicate wait times based on assigned acuity, allowing staff to ensure that pre-defined limits are not exceeded. “Patients appreciate the system and knowing that we value their time,” Brown says. “In fact, in the few instances where patients have left with a badge, they've been sure to return them. They think it's that important.”

Federal MASCAL Exercises

During recent federal mass casualty exercises, St. Joseph Hospital used the Versus solution to provide the real-time location of 50 victims during a simulated response



to a terrorist attack.

According to Brown, “Victims, including those who went to the morgue, were badged after they went through decontamination.

The command center could assess acuity levels and patient volume in real-time and keep track of patients, even if they were re-assessed and sent to another area. They were accustomed to a system where a “runner” would hand-deliver a batch of 10 patients and put them on a whiteboard. The command center commented that having this information on the Versus board in real-time was incredibly valuable.”



During the MASCAL exercises, Versus was used alongside another type of software that was designed for this type of program so that the Safety Director at St. Joseph Hospital could evaluate its usefulness. However, the other software was a click-and-drag system that didn't track patients and required someone to manually do so. Brown says, “Versus was ahead of them the entire time.”

Photos provided courtesy of PeaceHealth

About PeaceHealth

St. Joseph Hospital, PeaceHealth, in Bellingham, Washington, provides comprehensive and specialty care for the communities of Northwest Washington. Highly-trained caregivers are committed to providing safe, evidence-based, compassionate care to every patient. PeaceHealth is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1891 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, who continue today as sponsors of the PeaceHealth system serving communities in Washington, Oregon and Alaska.



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