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“Having this kind of technology available allows healthcare organizations to maximize the utilization of everything within the four walls of the hospital,” he said. “Keeping track of everything you need to keep track of – from patients and visitors to clinical staff and equipment – is an elaborate ballet. You can’t choreograph that ballet, and really optimize the way you do things, without the right technologies in place to tell you where things are in real time.”

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Streamlining processes, cutting costs

As anyone who has ever worked in a healthcare setting knows, hospitals are busy places. It can be easy for equipment – or even people – to get lost in the shuffle.

“Research studies suggest that providers have 40% more clinical assets than they really need,” he said. “Things get moved. Maybe a nurse has put a couple of extra items they use regularly in a closet or breakroom, so they won’t get caught short-handed. But later, no one seems to know where those assets are and hospitals either buy or rent more at significant cost.”
With an extensible IoT platform, hospitals can quickly and easily locate assets and receive intelligent insights into inventory availability in real-time – making the additional buys or rentals unnecessary.

“Once you have an IoT system in place, you can digitally touch all of these items,” he said. “You can not only locate them but also see if they are working by monitoring environments in real-time–which is especially important when you consider temperature-sensitive assets like refrigerators that house vaccines and medications.”

RTLS can also track people in real time. Hospitals can utilize the technology to see whether a patient is in radiology or still in the emergency department, saving them from a phone call or a search around the hospital floor. They can also use it to optimize their workforce utilization and clinician accountability.

“Just because a doctor is on the premises doesn’t mean that he or she is available at that moment,” Robinton explained. “Having RTLS allows you to see Dr. Johnson is occupied so you need to call Dr. Marks instead. In doing so, you are not only optimizing your workforce, you are also improving the patient experience by not making the patient sit there and wait for someone who can’t see them.”

**Infectious disease tracking**

As the threat of infectious disease continues to grow, RTLS also offers the ability for healthcare organizations to more easily characterize infection spread through contact tracing. If a staff member or patient does test positive for a contagious pathogen, RTLS can digitally track who else that individual has encountered over time. Additionally, those same technologies can be used as the foundation to monitor hand washing and sanitization protocols as clinical staff travel from room-to-room.

“By implementing hospital badge credentials and patient wristbands enabled with Bluetooth low energy (BLE), a core technology that drives RTLS capabilities, we can track the interactions and provide detailed visibility into who may have been potentially infected,” he said. “It allows for a rapid deployment solution that can help you better manage the spread of disease during both normal and pandemic conditions.”
Tracking the future

Investment in a comprehensive IoT strategy, leveraging a platform with open, scalable cloud architecture, can unify healthcare systems and applications in a way that offers provider organizations a reliable way to improve efficiencies and minimize unnecessary spend – all while improving health outcomes. Robinton recommends that healthcare organizations start simple, identifying the basic bottlenecks where RTLS can offer the greatest efficiencies – and not get locked into a proprietary solution that might hamstring their ability to evolve their capabilities later.

“Start by choosing solutions that are open standard and have the depth to be able to scale – because, ultimately, it will become a fundamental footprint on your strategy,” he said. “Don’t just think about the things you are trying to accomplish today, but how IoT and RTLS can change your ability to solve problems and improve workflows in the future.”

To learn more about how HID Global can help your healthcare organization accurately track and monitor assets, staff, and patients using an affordable, open standard cloud-based platform, visit https://hid.gl/4NK.