



Automated Safety Technology Helps Methodist Hospital of Southern California Contain COVID-19, Address Shortfalls in Hospital Safety

A Persistent Challenge for Patient and Staff Safety

While significant progress in U.S. hospitals has been made to reduce hospital-acquired infection (HAI) rates over the years, COVID-19 revealed an opportunity for organizations to do more. Most believed they were prepared to handle sizable infectious outbreaks, but the fast-spreading virus proved traditional safety measures to be untenable. In the first year of the pandemic, more than 3,600 U.S. healthcare workers sadly died from COVID-19 — and the death toll among hospitalized patients has been staggering.

Even with a vaccine, emerging variants are expected to continuously cause setbacks. Perhaps no other single event in the history of American healthcare has revealed the critical importance of preparedness for any eventuality. The “it can’t happen here” mentality has been debunked, replaced by determined vigilance to take action and drive impact.

Leading the Charge, Adopting Change

While innovative technologies like telemedicine, electronic health records, and robotic-assisted surgery have transformed care delivery over the past few decades, many of the most standard safety protocols, including hand hygiene and exposure tracking, are still conducted manually. Most hospital executives recognize that these lengthy tasks compromise accuracy and consistency needed to save lives — yet adoption of technology to drive improvement has been slow.

This realization became even more obvious in the Fall of 2020, when a second COVID-19 surge impacted Greater Los Angeles. As hospitals struggled to maintain adequate levels of patient care with many staff forced into isolation due to exposures, leaders at Methodist Hospital of Southern California knew they needed an automated process for real-time identification of individuals who had been exposed.



Methodist Hospital of Southern California

348
Licensed Beds

1,434 Employees &
271 Physicians

50,000+
Annual Emergency
Department Visits

Ranked by Healthgrades
as one of America’s
250 Best Hospitals
in 2020

An Urgent Need for Innovation to Drive Improvement

Manual Safety Protocols Proved Inadequate

Contact tracing is a cornerstone of communicable disease containment within hospitals and involves identifying, quarantining, and monitoring contacts of people exposed to infectious diseases. Because COVID-19 transmission can occur before symptoms become apparent, immediate exposure information is essential to controlling an outbreak.

Like many healthcare organizations, Methodist's traditional exposure tracking process relied on manual, detailed interviews performed by Occupational Health Services (OHS) to identify staff who may have had contact with an infected individual during the communicable period. Applying this process to COVID-19 could require weeks of time, several staff members, and yet was often deemed unreliable. "At one point, it was taking up to two weeks to get exposure information," said Bala Chandrasekhar, M.D., Methodist's Chief Medical Officer. "We were forced to send staff home unnecessarily at a time when we needed every provider on the frontline."

Transforming Patient and Staff Safety Through Technology

Even amidst the ongoing surges in COVID-19 cases, the forward-thinking team at Methodist knew they needed to address the ongoing challenges of COVID-19, while also trying to scale these advanced safety and infection prevention strategies to reduce HAIs and other safety risks, eliminate waste, and drive better health outcomes for the future.

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We recognized an urgent need for a technology that would improve and ensure patient safety and staff safety during this pandemic. And SwipeSense delivered. Today, our staff and patients feel confident that when they come to Methodist Hospital, they won't leave sicker than when they arrived.



Cliff Daniels

Chief Strategy Officer,
Methodist Hospital
of Southern California



The SwipeSense Safety Platform

Around that time, SwipeSense launched a new Contact Tracing module, taking advantage of the dynamic, adaptive nature of its platform to speed development. The folks at Methodist noticed, and immediately recognized how the technology aligned with their needs for real-time data. Aware that safety technology could address continuous improvement for several safety concerns now and into the future, they made the decision to implement the full SwipeSense safety platform, which includes:



Electronic Hand Hygiene Monitoring measures hand hygiene performance in order to drive behavior change, reduce the risk of spreading HAIs, and meet quality and safety standards set by organizations such as The Leapfrog Group.



Asset Tracking enables biomedical engineering and clinical staff to instantly locate lifesaving equipment, eliminating wasted staff time, preventing theft, and improving asset utilization.



Nursing Insights allows nursing leaders to measure performance of time-based activities, such as Purposeful Hourly Rounding, to sustain best practices shown to be key drivers in reducing patient falls and improving HCAHPS scores.



Contact Tracing automatically captures all employee-to-employee and employee-to-patient contacts, enabling infection control and occupational health staff to generate an initial list of at-risk staff, patients, and equipment with the click of a button.

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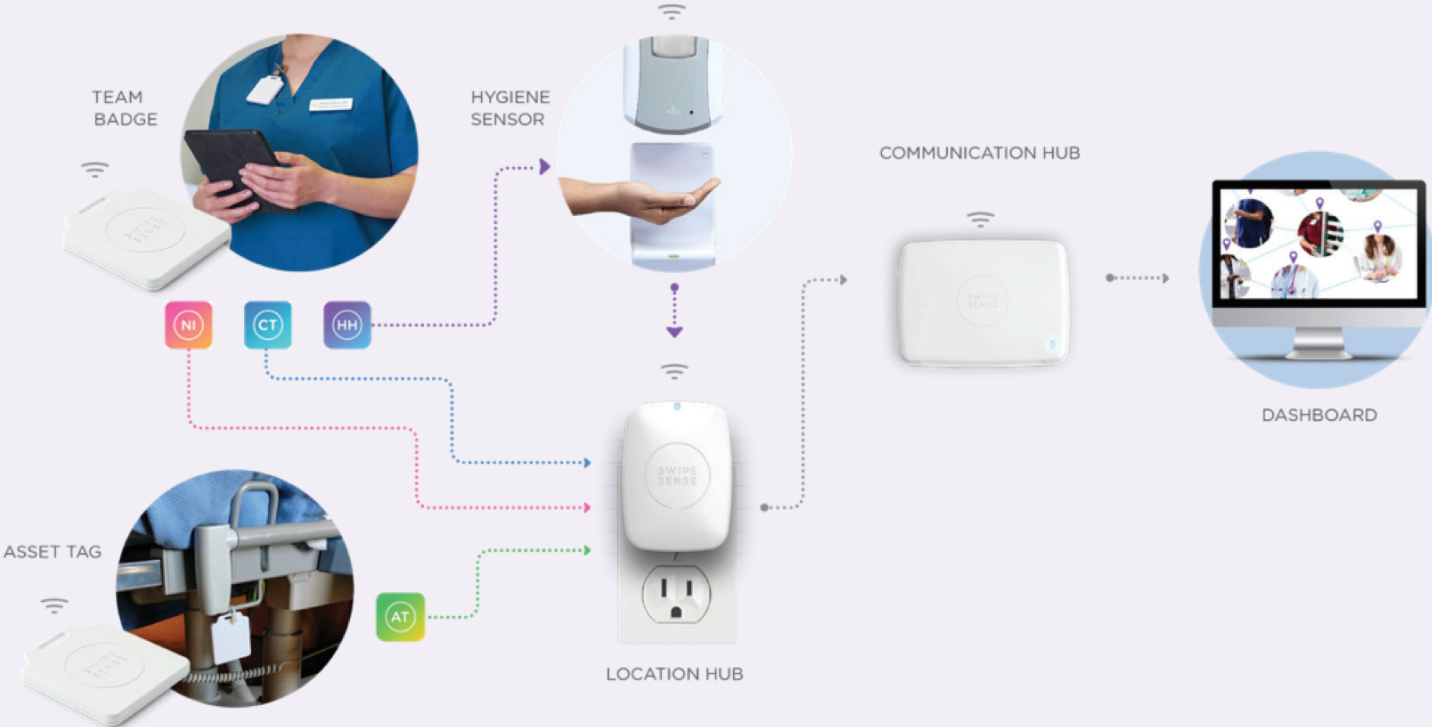
Of all the different technology projects that we have done in this hospital through the years, SwipeSense was the smoothest.



Bala Chandrasekhar, M.D.
Methodist's Chief
Medical Officer



A Single Set of Hardware Powers the SwipeSense Platform



SwipeSense provides one platform to replace multiple point solutions, delivering:

✓
Room-level data accuracy and granular tracking

✓
Intuitive user dashboard with high-level trends and user-level data

✓
Non-disruptive team member badges that do not require charging

✓
EHR integration to combine clinical and sensor data

A Safer Future for Patients and Staff

Automated contact tracing enables Methodist to immediately identify staff and patients at risk of infection, which has proved to be “a game-changer for us,” Chandrasekhar said. “Especially as the pandemic evolves, this was the right technology at the right time in the right place.”

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, manual contact tracing can take two weeks or longer and is often deemed unreliable in identifying staff and patients who might have been exposed. Automated contact tracing technology allows staff to assess exposure risk in as little as five minutes.

“We’re immediately able to notify people who had been exposed to someone with the virus,” Chandrasekhar said. “And another unique benefit we gain from SwipeSense is its ability to provide us with data on the duration of the contact — in minutes. If close contact does not last for a cumulative 15 minutes, then per CDC recommendations, we don’t have to contact hundreds of people. SwipeSense enables us to risk stratify and only alert people who have had meaningful contact where they’ve clearly been exposed.”

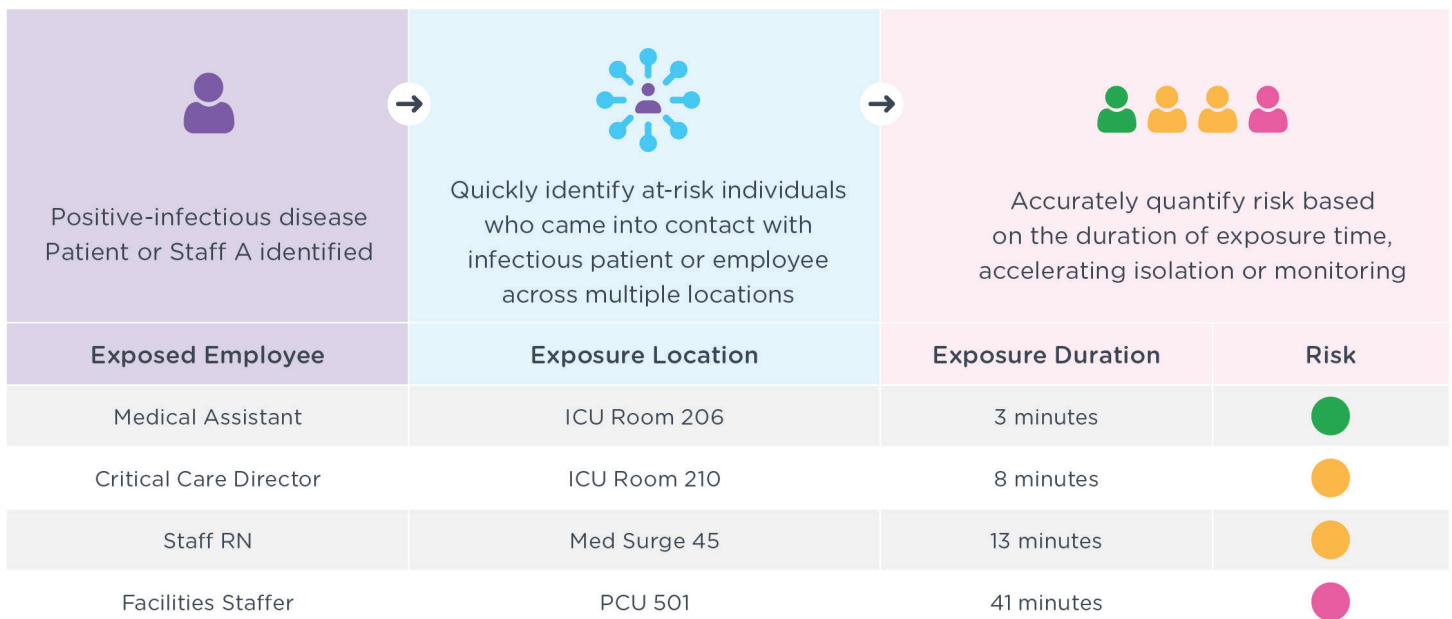
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Automated Contact Tracing enabled us to get to a point where we were effectively containing whatever spread of COVID-19 existed in the hospital — making sure people that came here didn’t go home sicker than when they arrived. It also enabled us to mitigate the employee absenteeism we were facing, by making people feel safe, ensuring our ability to keep the doors open.

Cliff Daniels
 Chief Strategy Officer,
 Methodist Hospital
 of Southern California

Automated Contact Tracing

Identifying Exposure Risk within Minutes



The Importance of Remaining Vigilant, Preparing for Future Threats

In addition to supporting urgent safety needs during the pandemic, automated safety technology has helped position Methodist to confidently plan for recovery and growth, enabling the team to:



Improve Speed, Accuracy, and Efficiency

The technology has significantly increased the effectiveness of Methodist's OHS team, greatly reducing time and effort to determine exposure across several locations and rooms.



Demonstrate Workplace Safety

Daniels said staff morale has improved, and they recognize the efforts being made to prioritize their safety and wellbeing.



Restore Consumer Trust and Drive Revenue

As Methodist seeks to recover lost revenue due to the pandemic, communicating the steps being taken - including the use of safety technology, has helped encourage patients that it's safe to return for care for elective, emergency, and chronic care management.



Comply with New California State Law

In September, 2020 California's Governor signed AB685, a bill requiring all employers in the state to notify employees of potential exposures to COVID-19. While many employers were still figuring out how to comply with these requirements, Methodist had an efficient way to notify staff.

"The SwipeSense platform will serve as our foundation for continuously improving patient and provider safety into the future. This pandemic will eventually subside, but viruses like COVID-19 are going to be with us forever. Going forward, it will be important for us to remain vigilant about contact tracing, to have that capability to prevent the next epidemic. SwipeSense will remain a very key tool in helping us to mitigate future threats."

Cliff Daniels

Chief Strategy Officer,
Methodist Hospital of Southern California

Get Started

Learn how the SwipeSense safety platform, can support your organization's efforts to build sustainable safety infrastructure.

SWIPE
SENSE