# Philadelphia Hospitals Implement Virtual Monitoring Carts to Enhance Patient Safety



Philadelphia hospitals are employing mobile carts equipped with video screens and cameras in their patient monitoring strategies to potentially lower risks associated with falls and self-harm. These carts allow remote nurses to observe and interact with patients from afar, enhancing their ability to monitor numerous patients simultaneously without physically moving from room to room. This system has shown promise in reducing incidents like patient falls.

However, there have been safety concerns, notably at Jefferson Abington Hospital, where the use of such devices in behavioral health units led to a state inspection in March after worries were raised that patients could use the devices' power cords to harm themselves. Consequently, the hospital temporarily reverted to traditional in-person monitoring for these patients. Despite adherence to national guidelines that approve virtual sitters in such settings, the incident prompted a reevaluation of their use in sensitive environments.

Health systems across the Philadelphia region continue experimenting and adapting this technology. Penn Medicine, which introduced virtual sitters to reduce one-on-one monitoring needs, found them less effective for patients needing constant, close supervision, due to issues like patient disorientation and equipment maneuverability. They are considering a transition to fixed, wall-mounted units to improve logistics and efficiency.

In South Jersey, Virtua Health is exploring the ability of their virtual nurses to handle administrative tasks traditionally carried out by in-person staff, which could free up resources and improve efficiency. Their initiative also aims to better include family members in care processes through virtual attendance at meetings.

Overall, while virtual monitoring technologies offer significant potential, the experiences of these health systems highlight the complexities and adjustments needed to optimize safety and effectiveness inpatient care.