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## Keeping an Eye on Wi-Fi

By Brian Brindle

Wireless is no longer limited to the use of PDAs and laptops, and is no longer viewed as a novelty in the health care environment. Physicians and nurses now use wireless tools on a daily basis to provide more efficient and effective patient care. Yet, while having immediate access to patient records, monitoring and lab test results is convenient, such access also poses security risks.

When Carilion Health System first installed a wireless medication administration system a few years ago, we implemented a “no wireless” policy, except with permission from our Technology Services Group. We used hand-held sniffers to detect unauthorized activity on the network. But the policy was violated several times a month by vendors bringing in ad-hoc devices. It quickly became clear that we needed a better process in place for constant monitoring of the wireless network. We also wanted capabilities for remote troubleshooting and historical information gathering.

Carilion installed AirDefense Enterprise, a distributed wireless security and monitoring system, which enabled us to continuously track all wireless devices on the network simultaneously. In addition to standard rogue detection on our network, this system offers intelligent wireless threat detection. At a glance I can see the potential threat level of a rogue device, and if the threat level is high enough, automated defenses can



be initiated to protect the network or devices.

Policy-based management enables us to police our wireless IV pumps and medication administration devices with different expectations. Sensors outside of the wireless network handle performance monitoring, giving a clear picture of what’s actually going over the air. The system maintains historical data, which allows us to analyze reports of intermittent wireless problems.

With a reliable wireless monitoring system in place, we are able to protect and maintain the network, and have the advantage of instant response to potential threats. Continuous wireless monitoring has been the key to providing the best technology to our staff and the best care to our patients.

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