

Watching over staff and patient safety

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New HD cameras help increase security at sites

Story by Erin Martinez

It's normally associated with catching "bad guys" in the act, but video surveillance is becoming more than that.

New video technology is improving the care and safety of patients, visitors and staff in Alberta Health Services health facilities.

The new technology is iCVR high-definition cameras – intelligent surveillance cameras with built-in video recording. They cover nearly three times more area than conventional digital cameras.

The HD cameras are equipped with almost seven times the resolution of a standard camera, to capture greater image details and provide better context for investigation, if required.

AHS is the first health organization in Canada, and one of the first in North America, to use these cameras.

"The cameras are a second set of eyes for the nursing staff after-hours, when there are minimal staffing levels," says Greg Smith, Director, Enterprise Security Systems and Analysis, AHS Protective and Parking Services.

The cameras have real-time monitoring capabilities; if, for example, a patient collapses, the cameras can sense the motion and send an alarm to Protective Services, who can immediately report to the nursing staff.

The technology can also help staff find a patient who has wandered away, as the analytics in the cameras can detect and trace the patient's movements.

Additionally, the cameras have the intelligence to detect, take photographs and send an alert to Protective Services if an unauthorized individual accesses a restricted area.

West Jasper Place Public Health Centre in Edmonton was one of the first sites in AHS to receive the technology a part of a pilot project. Operations Manager Andrea Guthrie says she and her staff value having the cameras installed in their workplace.

“The cameras give us a peace of mind, especially when we’re leaving work at night,” Guthrie says.

When staff leave for the day they usually contact Protective Services to watch as they walk out to their vehicles – a virtual safe walk program.

“Our clinic is in a shopping centre, which is located next to a local neighbourhood pub. Its good to know there’s someone watching out for me,” she says.

The iCVR was a top pick for AHS because of its lower installation and operating costs. It also requires less maintenance, server space and software than the current technology.

To date, more than 40 iCVR-HD cameras have been installed in 30 AHS facilities across the province.

“It is certainly our plan to deploy these cameras on a priority basis to health centres across Alberta in the very near future,” Smith says.