CASE STUDY

IOWA SPECIALTY HOSPITALS & CLINICS:

Dedicated Nocturnist Physician Partnership Model Builds Hospital Medicine Continuity

- Every call answered in <3 minutes
- Instant text responses to care questions
- Fewer patient transfers

Iowa Specialty Hospitals & Clinics

Located in north-central Iowa, this health system operates two 25-bed Critical Access Hospitals in Clarion and Belmond, Iowa. The hospitals serve residents of this farming region due north of Des Moines and Ames. Today, both hospitals use Eagle's TeleNocturnist service.

THE NEED

Physician Retention and Hospital Medicine Continuity

Iowa Specialty Hospitals & Clinics faced growing pressure in its Hospital Medicine program as physician retirements and workforce constraints strained overnight care.

As Hospital Medicine becomes a higher priority for health systems and hospitals, strong overnight care is essential to maintain continuity and reduce avoidable transfers.

Key obstacles included:

- Several physicians nearing retirement
- Remaining providers managing 24/7 call alongside daytime workloads
- Difficulty maintaining consistent overnight care continuity across inpatient services
- The need to improve physician work-life balance to support retention
- Pressure to reduce avoidable transfers to tertiary facilities
- A new internal medicine physician requiring reduced overnight demands for long-term retention

To address these challenges, Iowa Specialty Hospitals & Clinics explored options to strengthen its overnight Hospital Medicine capability while maintaining its commitment to quality care.

THE CHALLENGE

Finding the Right Overnight Hospital Medicine Model

The health system explored an overnight telemedicine model to strengthen night coverage, but an initial solution did not meet operational or clinical expectations.

The model relied on a large rotating pool of physicians, which created inconsistent clinical relationships and fragmented communication with on-site care teams.

> "We never got the same provider twice. The technology was also inadequate, simply a small iPad attached to an IV pole. It was very hard for the team to manage patients with that process, and the technology felt unrefined."
>
> - Robyn Paulsen, Director of Telehealth, Community, and Business Development, Iowa Specialty Hospitals & Clinics

For a system with a strong culture of service excellence and high patient experience standards, consistency and integration were essential requirements that the prior model failed to deliver.

Gaps in overnight Hospital Medicine coverage often led to delayed clinical decision-making, increased patient transfers, and added strain on care teams. Over time, these challenges could impact care quality, operational stability, and provider retention across health systems and hospitals.

Eagle Telemedicine Benefits:

- Dedicated TeleNocturnist physician team of five
- Rapid response support for inpatient care teams
- Secure two-way audio-video connection
- Improved patient care for higher-acuity patients
- Fewer patient transfers to tertiary hospitals
- Improved physician work-life balance and retention support

THE SOLUTION

A Dedicated Nocturnist Physician Partnership Model

Iowa Specialty Hospitals & Clinics partnered with Eagle Telemedicine to build a dedicated nocturnist physician partnership model to strengthen overnight Hospital Medicine operations.

Instead of rotating providers, Eagle embedded a consistent team of five TeleHospitalist physicians across both hospital sites. This created continuity across night shifts and improved coordination with on-site care teams.

Eagle worked as an integrated partner, aligning with existing workflows and sharing accountability for overnight clinical and operational outcomes.

The program was supported by enhanced clinical capabilities, including technology Eagle helped recommend and configure for the facility:

- High-resolution video for remote evaluation
- Audiovisual tools for real-time communication
- E-stethoscope functionality for higher-acuity decision-making

The result was a more stable overnight Hospital Medicine environment with:

- Consistent physician presence
- Better coordination with on-site teams
- Faster clinical decision-making

This approach established a durable nocturnist infrastructure designed to support long-term HospitalMedicine continuity rather than a short-term fix.

THE IMPACT

Improved Clinical Continuity and Care Delivery

With a dedicated physician team in place, Iowa Specialty Hospitals & Clinics strengthened overnight care coordination and improved responsiveness across inpatient units.

On-site teams developed familiarity with Eagle physicians, enabling faster communication and more efficient clinical decision-making during night shifts.

> "We are now able to treat higher acuity patients that would have been transferred otherwise."
>
> - Robyn Paulsen, Director of Telehealth, Community, and Business Development, Iowa Specialty Hospitals & Clinics

"The presence of the provider is lifelike, and it's easy for the staff to manage. You can also see the TeleNocturnist has established a personal relationship with our hospital staff, with the kind of conversations you'd have in person, like, how are your kids, etc."

The consistency of the physician team also improved responsiveness during overnight care.

"Every call has been answered instantly—always in less than three minutes," said Paulsen. "Now, a nurse can text the TeleNocturnist and get a response right away. The nurse gets the answer they need, and the patient gets care in real time—without waking up a local provider at 1 or 2 a.m. That's great continuity of care."

THE RESULT

Through its integrated partnership with Eagle, Iowa Specialty Hospitals & Clinics strengthened its Hospital Medicine infrastructure and improved overnight inpatient care delivery.

Key outcomes included:

- Response times of three minutes or less for overnight clinical needs
- Reduced avoidable patient transfers
- Improved continuity through a dedicated physician team model
- Stronger coordination between on-site teams and TeleHospitalists
- Improved physician work-life balance and retention support
- More consistent overnight Hospital Medicine care

This partnership model enabled the health system to treat more patients locally while maintaining alignment between inpatient care teams across both hospital locations.

Learn More

Contact Eagle Telemedicine to discuss your Hospital Medicine program.

Learn how a dedicated TeleHospitalist physician partnership model can strengthen overnight care, improve continuity, and reduce avoidable transfers.