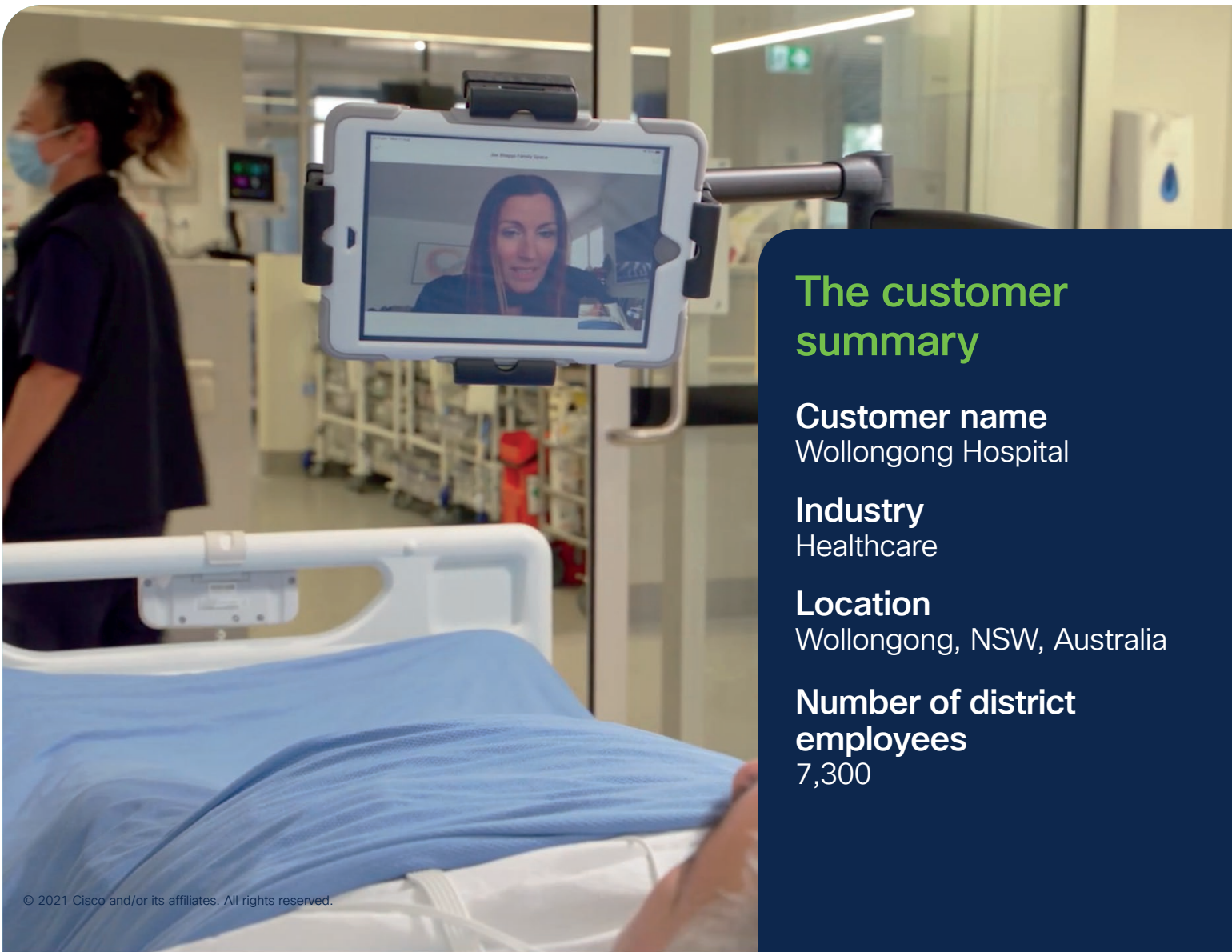


Wollongong Hospital

Wollongong Hospital Virtual Visitation Solution Connects ICU Patients and Families

Intensive care nurses attend to life-threatening patient conditions while both welcoming and limiting visitors in the ICU



The customer summary

Customer name
Wollongong Hospital

Industry
Healthcare

Location
Wollongong, NSW, Australia

Number of district employees
7,300



Challenge

- Provide a way for family to connect with their seriously ill loved ones in ICU



Solution

- Customized virtual communications solution developed by Taleka and Citrus Solutions using Webex by Cisco



Benefit

- Secure and constantly available communication channel
- Easy for busy medical staff to initiate in two simple clicks
- Hands-free operation for seriously ill ICU patients

Connecting ICU patients with family virtually

With more than 500 beds, Wollongong Hospital provides services to the Illawarra and Shoalhaven Region, with a population of some 350,000 in New South Wales, Australia. It is the largest of the local health district's eight hospitals. Its ER department receives approximately 70,000 patients annually and its ICU provides important critical care.

Because of the intensive medical care required in the ICU, hospitals manage a delicate balance of both welcoming and limiting family as visitors, updating those living a distance away and rigorously attending to the health demands of critical patients often in life-threatening conditions. A patient's loved ones, out of the area or overseas, can feel helpless and disconnected, while patients feel isolated and frightened. When hospitals worldwide needed to pause all ICU visitations, Wollongong Hospital looked for possible solutions.

While looking at technology options that might connect ICU patients with loved ones who are unable to visit, the hospital discovered that traditional devices and other existing virtual communications apps were not suitable for patients who are too ill to hold a device or sign into their own account. None of the existing options considered the security and patient privacy needs for use at a hospital or the heavy demands on ICU staff to schedule each family interaction.

Wollongong Hospital set out to solve this challenge with a customized, integrated virtual communication solution. The hospital worked with technology adoption partner Taleka and IT solutions provider Citrus Solutions to create 'HowRU' based on Webex by Cisco.

“HowRU is customized for busy hospitals. Family and patients can connect very easily and flexibly. The patient care experience is improved through the connection and support of family.”

Dr. Kathleen Thomas

Intensive Care Advanced Trainee, Wollongong Hospital

Taleka worked closely with ICU staff and patients' families to understand their unique needs and workflow requirements, then Citrus applied its innovation and automation skills to simplify the user experience into just a few steps. The solution is delivered over an electronic device which is secured onto a mobile and adjustable stand that enables hands-free operation.

HowRU solves the technical, logistical, and privacy issues faced when patients may be unconscious or too ill to use traditional devices and off-the-shelf apps. A secure account is established and verified, a family space is created, and loved ones are invited by email to join the space. Families are provided with a welcome message and short instruction video for easy set up at home, whether that is in a neighborhood near the hospital or across the globe. Enabling an experience broader than just a one-to-one video chat, HowRU allows everyone in the space to talk, exchange messages, share photos, play music, and more, just as they might have done if they were together in person. Even when the patient can't engage in the space directly, loved ones can still be connected, providing essential support to the patient and each other. Once the space is open, ICU staff can leave the room and allow private time with patients and their loved ones in a virtual, safe, and confidential environment. The always-ready space can be opened at any time with just two taps by a patient or ICU staff.

The Wollongong staff explains that families can connect at any time, supporting Wollongong's core values of open and flexible visiting, with minimal input from nurses, which can dramatically improve the patient and family centered care experience. Wollongong Hospital recognizes the positive impact on patients, families, and staff in having the HowRU solution. Virtual visitation remains an on ongoing feature in the ICU and neighboring ICU at Shoalhaven Hospital.

For more information

Please visit: cisco.com/go/healthcare

To discover more on the development and implementation of the HowRU solution, see the [Journal of Intensive Care Medicine](#)

Product list

- [Webex by Cisco](#)
- [Taleka HowRU](#)
- [Citrus Solutions HowRU](#)