



St. Luke's University Health Network

By Sam Kennedy

PA Hospital System Recruits College Students Home on Break in Fight against COVID
 St. Luke's University Health Network has tapped college students home on break to remotely monitor hospitalized COVID patients using revolutionary medical technology.

Starting Dec. 19, a cadre of "virtual monitoring technicians" is now stationed 24/7 before digital screens in St. Luke's Virtual Response Center (VRC), watching patients' vital signs transmitted via Masimo Patient SafetyNet wireless devices.

In April, St. Luke's became one of the first health systems worldwide to use the Masimo SafetyNet cloud-based platform to help clinicians care for patients remotely. It comprises a wireless finger sensor to detect oxygen saturation, respiration and heart rate – vital signs that provide doctors and nurses with valuable, real-time clinical data that informs treatment decisions.

Kendra Siegfried, a Widener University nursing major, was one of the first students to join this new program following a full-day orientation to the technology, medical terms and care processes. During her shift watching a large monitor in the VRC displaying the statuses of about 50 patients, she reported to the RN in the Center several times when alarms were triggered as patients' oxygen levels dipped dangerously low. She also called the inpatient bedside nurse when the battery of a patient's Masimo remote finger-probe monitor was weak and needed replacing.

St. Luke's started recruiting these science-savvy youngsters, many majoring in the biological sciences and health fields, from among their employees' families and friends, and directly from colleges and universities.

"Back in November, when we saw that the second wave of COVID was coming, we realized we needed to find the right people with the right backgrounds, abilities and attitudes to help us," says St. Luke's manager Kim Sargent, who heads up the project.

St. Luke's received more than 400 applications from students attending schools like Penn State, Kings College, Duquesne and Wilkes. Fourteen have been hired so far, many of them home for the holidays or homebound and taking online classes. They are paid by the hour and their flexible schedules allow for other part-time work and school studies.

In January, St. Luke's will begin monitoring nursing home patients and will install the technology in select patients' homes, expediting the discharge of patients and freeing up the critically needed beds.

Students working in the VRC: Stephen Botek, Penn State University; Briana Huff, St. Vincent College; Savannah Labukas (Moravian College); Steven McCreary, Arcadia University (graduated); Lexi Rice, Drexel University; Kylie Rosamalie, Kings College; Kia Santiago, Penn State University; Skylar Santiago, Penn State University; Emilia Serafin, Kings College; Kendra Siegfried, Widener University; Lauren Yeaw, Duquesne University.

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