

tions have recently incorporated internal communication services, allowing pharmacists to instant-message others on their computers.

Although text messaging has rapidly become a ubiquitous means for many of us to communicate with one another, its use is problematic when dealing with particular types of information. For instance, texting is not HIPAA compliant and makes users who choose to share patient information via SMS vulnerable to being held liable for personal health information breaches. The reason is the average user's personal device is most likely not utilizing encrypted messaging, and the message traffic may be stored transiently on intermediate servers where the information may be vulnerable to exposure if breached.

Options for Integrating Texting

Options for integrating texting as a service for communication in the healthcare environment are possible, although it requires a careful risk/benefit analysis by the organization along with the installation and deployment of secure third-party solutions. Such companies, if utilized, will supply encryption-enabled communication services and help develop internal policies for users to follow. **Table 6-2** provides some background on several companies creating HIPAA-compliant communication platforms which may be of interest to the reader. As seen in **Figure 6-1**, the concept of creating a secure area where practitioners can chat with each other about patient specific data and share information that may be drawn from the electronic health record is very intriguing as a means of enhancing current communication in clinical practice.

These companies are seeking to create platforms whereby all members of a healthcare team, including the patient, can communicate with each other. As the network of health professionals communicate and share information, they are creating an archive of the patient's care, which future providers can review for a complete patient background. One example includes using these services for pharmacists to receive prescriptions (via e-prescribing or CPOE) and then communicating issues in-real time with a provider.

Although text/instant messaging services have become valuable among pharmacy healthcare professionals, video communication is another emerging tool that is rapidly gaining traction, especially finding utility in health networks where team members are spread across multiple locations. Although video conferencing has traditionally been relegated to computers or meeting rooms devised for such purposes, mobile devices now are capable of meeting these needs, thanks in part to more advanced cameras and speakers/microphones.

Table 6-2. Examples of HIPAA-Compliant Messaging Apps

App Name	Lua	Klara	Stitch
Vendor	Lua Technologies	Goderma Inc.	Stitch Technologies
Link	https://getlua.com/	https://klara.com/	https://teamstitch.com/
Mobile OS Supported	iOS/Android	iOS/Android	iOS/Android
HIPAA Compliant	Yes	Yes	Yes
Third-Party App Integration	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cost	Tiered pricing	Free to start with opt-in paid plans	Cost per user per month
Desktop Application	Yes	No	Yes
Access via Web Browser	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sync	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sharing	Yes	Yes	Yes

HIPAA = Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

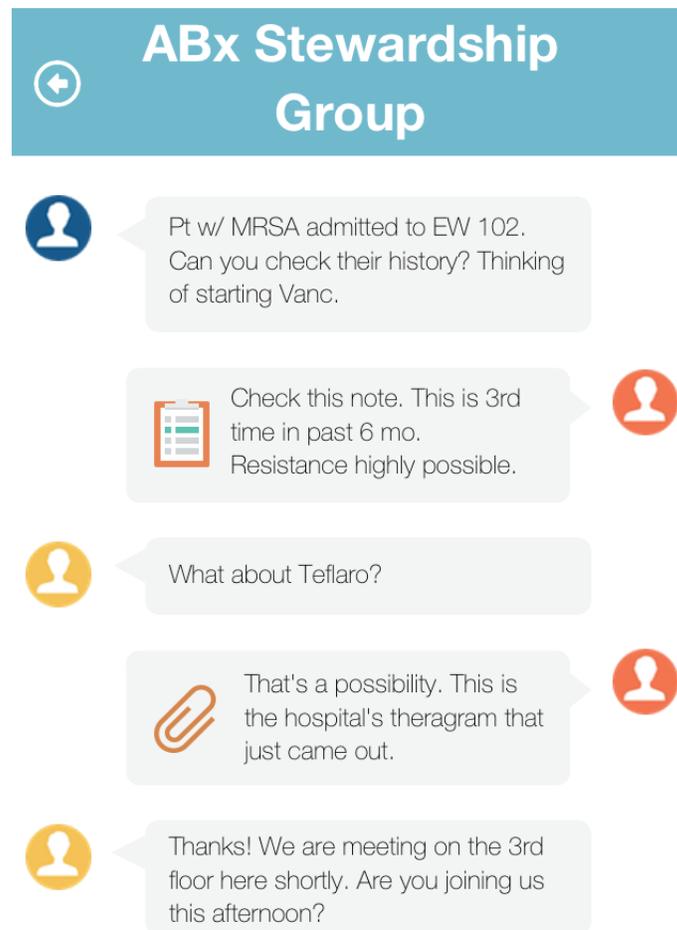


Figure 6-1. Advanced Clinical Messaging Example

MRSA = methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*;
 Pt w/ = patient with; Vanc = vancomycin.

The benefits of video conferencing are reduced logistical barriers of traveling and meeting room designation, as well as a more personable communication platform versus teleconferencing. Some benefits of video conferencing include showing others via the camera what the user is looking at, which can be very beneficial for communication at a point of time. Current video conferencing software allows multiple users in real-time to communicate while also allowing for the secure sharing of data or personal computer screens during the course of the conversation. A number of video conferencing services are described in **Table 6-3**.