The Joint Commission
Journal on Quality and Patient Safety®

Interactive Voice Response Systems May Increase Ease and Efficiency of Incident Reporting

Incident reporting systems (IRSs) are an essential patient care tool, empowering health care organizations to capture errors and identify near misses by enabling frontline personnel to report incidents.

A study from the December 2021 issue of *The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety (JQPS)* suggests telephone-based interactive voice response systems (IVRSs), an innovative approach to incident reporting, may be more efficient than web-based approaches and encourage higher reporting rates.
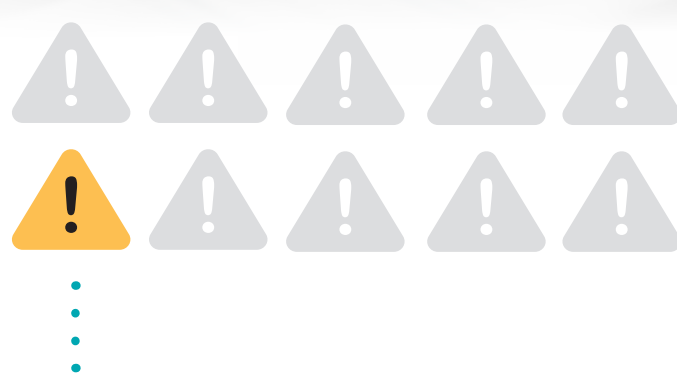
Studies suggest IRSs detect less than 10% of all adverse events.

The 3 most common barriers to incident reporting are:

Lack of time: 92%
of respondents answered "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" to this statement:

66 I don't have enough time to fill out an incident form. 99

Complex reporting: 76%
of respondents answered "strongly agree" or somewhat agree" to this statement:

66 The incident form is too complicated. 99

Lack of feedback: 92%
of respondents answered "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree to this statement:

66 I never get any feedback. 99

To be truly effective, reporting systems must serve three primary stakeholders:

Patients
IRS should improve long-term safety measures without compromising confidentiality or immediate treatment.

Hospital staff users
IRS needs to be easily accessible and user-friendly.

Quality Improvement (QI) department
IRS must be easy to maintain and provide usable data that can guide institutional change.
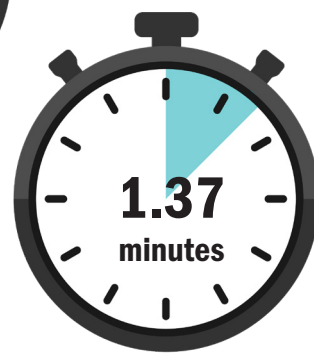
In the featured study, IVRS increased the number of reports while decreasing all three barriers to reporting.
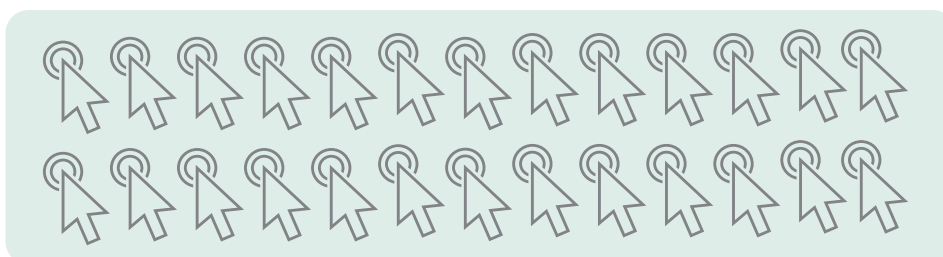
1 Reporting time

10.7 minutes

The web-based IRS cost **10.7 minutes** per report...
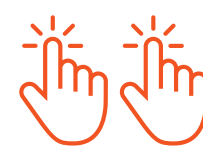
1.37 minutes

while the average time to complete the IVRS system report was **1.37 minutes**.

2 Complexity

The web-based IRS had **22 mandatory text fields**...

while the IVRS system required **2 dial pushes and 4-6 voice inputs**.

3 Turnaround time for feedback

The web-based IRS provided **no user feedback**, only generating monthly manager reports...

while the IVRS **generated reports at the 10- and 31-day mark** to department staff.

The study suggests IVRS systems...

- permit providers to submit reports in near-real-time
- run at a low cost
- are user friendly, providing instruction in real time and eliminating the need for orientation sessions
- employ easy-to-use coding so operators need minimal technological ability
- provide informative and timely data to help improve patient safety and quality of care
- increase participation in reporting adverse events

IVRS

Web-based IRS
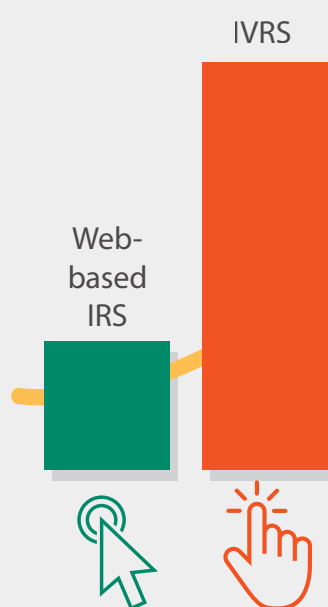
The study showed IVRS increased reporting from **.99 report per day** to average of **3.43 reports** per day.

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The effect novel IVRSs have on reporting culture requires further investigation. This study, which represents a first attempt to compare voice-enabled data collection techniques, shows IVRS removed common barriers to reporting and improved reporting practices.

To learn more about this study, visit:
https://www.jointcommissionjournal.com/article/S1553-7250(21)00243-9/fulltext