

# Residence Wellness Alert®

## CASE STUDY

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**TelASK**

In September 2019 Alberta Health Services officially declared a gastrointestinal virus outbreak in the University of Alberta's Lister Residence after dozens of students reported to **Wellness Alert®** that they were experiencing noro-like symptoms. Nurses used the **Wellness Alert®** clinician interface to monitor reports in real time and we mobilized our Public Health Response Team (PHRT) to come up with an action plan. We implemented enhanced cleaning protocols and sent messages to the residence community regarding proper hand hygiene protocol and other self-care tips. The University of Alberta's Health Centre (UHC) worked closely with Alberta Health Services, our PHRT and TelASK to mitigate the outbreak and ensure students received the care and attention they needed.

The original decision to implement **Wellness Alert®** came out of recognition that residence disease outbreaks were impacting the academics and health of our students as well as costing the university significant human and financial resources to combat. A 2010 outbreak of noro-like symptoms in the Lister Centre residence resulted in **198 students** becoming ill before the outbreak was mitigated. The costs of that event totaled more than **\$11,000** in staff resources and supplies. That does not consider intangible costs such as the effect on student academic performance or the institution's reputation.

In addition to the September 2019 outbreak, **Wellness Alert®** previously identified two other occurrences of noro-like symptoms before the disease could spread further. Additionally, a third potential out-break of flu-like symptoms was detected. This would have previously gone



unnoticed while significantly impacting the health of the residence community.

The UHC also values **Wellness Alert®**'s reporting tools. We can generate real-time reports that assist us in monitoring residence health and making informed planning decisions regarding resources and emergency response initiatives. The reports allow us to target hygiene sessions and health education presentations for floors with the highest propensities for illness. The system allows UHC to generate reports on specific types of illness, create Epi-curves and enhance those curves with graphical representations of the interventions introduced during potential outbreaks to track their effectiveness.

Because we continue to recognize the value of the **Wellness Alert®** system in protecting the health and safety of our students, in February 2020 the UHC expanded the system to five additional residence towers.

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