

Health Data MANAGEMENT

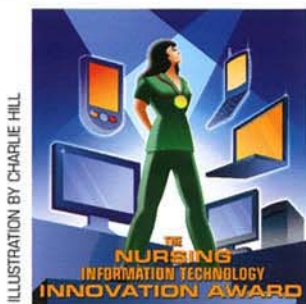
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THE NURSING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION AWARD

By Greg Gillespie
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Honorable Mention

AUTOMATING 'HAND OFFS' BETWEEN SHIFTS



Nurses at Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center used to take up to an hour to hand write the "hand-off" reports that updated nurses working the next shift about the treatments and status of their patients.

During this time, patients may not have been receiving care because some nurses were filling out reports and others were coming on shift and looking through the reports, says Kathy Mikos, R.N., at the 475-bed hospital in Joliet, Ill. "It was a kind of chaos," she recalls.

To streamline the process, the hospital developed an electronic voice recording system with help from the White Stone Group, Knoxville, Tenn. Now nurses dial into the system, enter their access code and the patient's medical record number and record or listen to the necessary information.

Nurses record information in a standardized format called SBAR, which covers the areas of Situation, Background, Assessment and Recommendation. Those retrieving information can skip certain sections they already know about, such as background, and can slow down a speaker's speech or speed it up.

Voice recording has eliminated errors caused by illegible handwriting, Mikos says, while speeding up the entire reporting process. Instead of taking an hour to hand-write hand-off reports, it now takes about 15 minutes to record them. "This enables me to have staff at the bedside rather than being tied up with reports," Mikos says.

The time saved has increased nurse availability for patient surveillance during shift changes. The result has been demonstrated through an improvement in response time to patient call lights and a decrease in patient falls during shift changes. Further, shift changes are quieter and patient privacy is better protected. "You used to have 20 people chattering on the floor," Mikos says.

Based on an analysis of the hand-off reporting process on two medical/surgical floors, the medical center expects an annual cost savings of approximately \$550,000 and a 50% reduction in overtime once the voice recording system is fully implemented on all floors.

Executives now are exploring other potential uses for the system, such as providing up-to-date communication to patients' family members. The hospital is also considering having physicians use the system to improve the quality of their hand-off reports. Further, the system is being implemented at two other Provena Health hospitals in Illinois—Provena Covenant Medical Center in Urbana and Provena United Samaritans Medical Center in Danville. •



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