



Joint Commission
RESOURCES

Improving Hand-Off Communication



CASE STUDY 6-3

CASE STUDY AT A GLANCE

Name of the organization: Located in Joliet, Illinois, Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center is a 485-bed acute care facility.

Purpose of the project: To develop a customized voice technology system to improve the efficiency of the shift-to-shift nursing report.

Lessons learned: The most important lesson learned was to actively involve frontline staff in the design of the program.

Outcomes: After implementing the voice technology system, time spent in nursing report has decreased by approximately 70%.

Staff involved: The vice president of patient services, a nursing director, an assistant patient care manager, and several nursing staff members.

Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center Uses Voice Technology System

Nursing report at shift change used to take up to an hour at Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center, Joliet, Illinois. Kathy Mikos, R.N., M.S.N., vice president of Patient Services, Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center, knew there had to be a better way. “On any given floor, up to 10 oncoming nurses could be trying to get report from 9 offgoing nurses at the same time. That could leave almost 20 nurses tied up for up to an hour instead of being available to care for patients.” Some of the staff nurses alerted Mikos to a voice technology program that was being used for nursing report at a nearby hospital. As a result, Mikos did some research and decided to develop a customized, automated, shift-to-shift reporting system at Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center.

As a result of this project, Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center installed a voice technology system that could be

accessed from any telephone in the hospital. When a nurse is ready to give a report, he or she dials in to the system, inputs an access code, and then punches in the patient's medical record number. The system has a series of built-in prompts for patient demographics, such as name, age, and diagnosis. Once the nurse has finished with the prompts, he or she can add a free-flowing report.

When a nurse comes on shift, he or she also dials in to the system, inputs an access code, and then punches in each patient's medical record number, one at a time, to get reports for all of his or her patients. "The system has some great features," Mikos says. "If the nurse who gave report is speaking too quickly, you can actually slow the recording down. You can also skip over the demographics if you've worked with the patient enough times that you already have that information." After the nurse finishes listening to the reports, he or she goes out to the floor and has an opportunity to speak to the outgoing nurses for question or clarification.

Although the system was originally designed for nursing report at shift change, it is now also used for hand-off communication between departments. "If a patient is being transferred from the emergency department (ED) to another unit, the ED nurse calls the floor nurse to give report," Mikos explains. "The ED nurse stays on the phone until the floor nurse picks up the call. If the floor nurse is too busy to take a full report at that time, the ED nurse informs him or her that the patient report will be put into the system and the patient will arrive on the floor in 30 minutes. The receiving floor nurse knows that he or she has 30 minutes to listen to the report before the patient arrives. The ED nurse will include his or her name and cell phone number in the system report in case there is a need for further patient information. If the ED nurse will be going off shift within the 30 minutes, then he or she is not allowed to place the report in the system and must conduct verbal report. This has been built into a protocol for nursing staff."

IMPLEMENTATION

Although Mikos admits that there was some resistance to the new system, the voice technology system was

ultimately well received by the nursing staff. "The nurses were actively involved in the design," she says. "That definitely helped with buy-in. It was also so easy to learn. We had pocket cards with instructions that we gave to all the nurses, and additional copies were left by all the phones. There are so many advantages to this system that it makes the nurses' jobs that much easier."

EVALUATION

Since the implementation of the voice technology system, there has been a decrease in staff time for shift report of approximately 70%. "This not only benefits the patients because the nurses have more time for patient care but also the hospital because we're saving money on overtime," Mikos says. "An added benefit to the patients is that there used to be a lot of noise during shift change, and now it's almost silent."

To assess the effectiveness of the information being shared, Mikos and six nursing directors sat down and listened to some of the nursing reports and scored them based on quality. "Of the 12 to 15 reports we listened to, we only heard 1 that needed improvement." ■