

Modern Healthcare



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A supplement to *Modern Healthcare*

SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR QUALITY—WINNER

Ending confusion

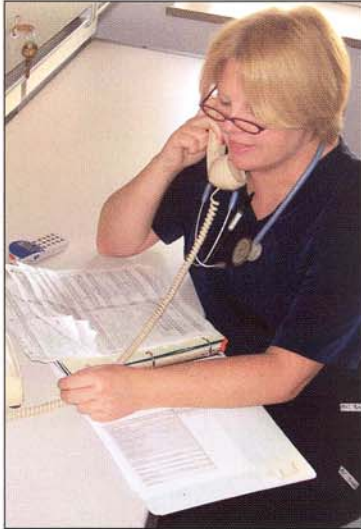
Provena smooths nurse shift changes

Shift changes among nurses at 454-bed Provena St. Joseph Medical Center in Joliet, Ill., had become a chaotic, noisy mess that led to a lack of privacy for patients and ballooning overtime for the nurses themselves as they struggled to communicate patients' status.

Communication breakdowns from such handoffs sometimes lead to medical errors, which led the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations to require that standards for handoff communication be developed.

A team of nurse-executives at the center has developed a standardized process to improve quality, accuracy and efficiency. Provena replaced traditional taped and written reports with a voice-based reporting system through which caregivers can enter and receive information at any time during their shifts, rather than all at once at shift change.

This has greatly eased the melee that resulted when each nurse coming on shift needed to talk with four or five different nurses coming off



Provena St. Joseph adopted a voice-based reporting system to reduce confusion during shift changes.

shift, each of whom simultaneously was being approached by four or five other arriving nurses, says Kathy Mikos, vice president of patient services, who led the effort. "It drove us to say, 'There has to be a better way to do this,'" she says.

The new system is easier to search and provides features such as the ability to slow down a report from a nurse who's talking quickly, Mikos says.

"The report definitely is a stressor. It impacted on overtime. This definitely helped us get a better quality of report," she says. "It helps to keep the process going so we can keep our patients flowing."

At the end of the four-month evaluation period on two medical-surgical floors, the center found the time required to fill out shift-change reports had been reduced by nearly 70% and overtime cut by more than 40%.

Staff indicated less noise and chaos during that time and an increased ability to respond to patients. For these results, the center has won the 2006 Spirit of Excellence Award in the Quality category.

The acute-care center has enjoyed \$375,000 in cost savings from the reduced overtime thus far, while the system initially cost \$35,000, including \$10,000 for a new server, plus \$2,000 per month for software upkeep, Mikos says.

"It pays for itself very, very quickly," she adds. "Our reports were going anywhere from about 45 minutes to an hour, sometimes more than that. Now, five or six patients can be done in 15 minutes."

"That whole communications piece is a big issue in all hospitals," says Alan Jones, judge for the Quality category and vice president of human resources at 440-bed Christ Hospital in Cincinnati.

"It always seems to bog down. If this can work well, and they can show documented savings, I think that's a pretty good project," Jones says. <<

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