The Writing on the Wall
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INTRODUCTION
A nursing team at Nash Health Care Systems developed interactive communication boards to guide bedside shift report and improve patient satisfaction. The team designed this project to upgrade the hospital’s outdated white boards with multipurpose communication boards based on evidence-based research, current literature review, and evolving practice standards that integrate patients and family members into every element of care. This strategy rapidly supported efforts encouraging bedside shift report and generated improved perception of quality among patients as validated using measured standards.

Patient satisfaction increases when patients and families feel included in planning and communication. Nursing teams ensured patient participation by increasing time spent at the bedside to continue multipurpose communication messages with patients, and sharing daily updates plans in clear and understandable terms.

STRATEGY
The innovative design created by a team of bedside nurses communicates elements of daily care with patients and their families. This project differs from previous communication methods by transferring focus from providers to patients. Headings provide space for patients to write “What is important to me and my family” and clearly identifies “My pain goals” using bright colors and open spaces.

Nurses can deliver bedside shift report using the communication boards to guide conversations. As nurses share traditional shift-change information, patients can visualize reminders about planned procedures, tests, and upcoming events.

Patients and their families are encouraged to write questions or comments on the boards to prompt discussions when team members visit the room.

IMPLEMENTATION
Leaders approved this communication tool and expanded efforts to include all applicable patient care areas. Based on standardized templates, nurses can easily customize subjects and content to address individual patient concerns, unit-wide issues, language barriers, or educational changes. Board inserts can be interchanged to meet the needs of Spanish or pediatric patients to meet patient-specific needs.

Nurses successfully introduced this tool by reinforcing it with:
- Step-by-step flyer
- 12-minute training video staring hospital employees as actors to demonstrate bedside shift report using the new communication boards
- A hospital-approved competency and validation for bedside nurses

This “Writing on the Wall” preceded positive, measured outcomes for NHCS. The project points to opportunities for continued improvement and integration of patients and families with every element of care and communication. This tool allows members of the health care team to support successful outcomes while continually re-directing efforts that maintain the patient as the most important member of each team. The team continues to pursue approval from the organization’s internal review board to complete additional front-line research to validate this success.

EVALUATING OUTCOMES
Leaders measured and monitored the success of this project by tracking patient satisfaction scores collected using Press Ganey surveys and reported to the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS). HCAHPS provides standardized metrics and uses nationally recognized measurements for publicly reported information about the patient’s experience. HCAHPS allows hospitals to compare performance to other providers in the health care industry locally, regionally and nationally.

MEASURED RESULTS

CONCLUSIONS
Using the communication board to guide shift report and share data promotes inclusion of patients and families in team conversations. Future trends in health care require delivery of high-quality, patient-centered care. This tool facilitates our goals and improves patient satisfaction. Barriers the team identified and overcame included:
- Fear that shift report will take too long.
- Desire to share information without the patient or family as an audience.
- Concern about patient confidentiality.
- Accountability: Who is responsible for updates?

After an introductory period, the nursing population has overwhelmingly accepted this tool and reported the design as convenient and useful. An employee culture adapts to embrace the shift toward patient and family-centered care, this tool remains relevant for sharing information.

FUTURE PLANS
Future plans include a formalized qualitative research study to identify patient perspectives and further validate the value of communication boards. Based on a study identified during literature review, a request has been submitted to the organization’s internal review board for approval to begin the qualitative survey among inpatient populations for data collection.

REFERENCES

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