

The Power of Digital Whiteboards to Improve Patient Communication

The Communication Challenge

Communication breakdown in hospitals can be a real problem leading to medical errors, safety issues, low HCAHPS scores, and ultimately financial losses. A recent study (Beryl, 2018) underscored patients' desire for clear, easy-to-understand communication about their healthcare. Patients want:

- Clinicians who take patient pain seriously.
- A clean, comfortable, quiet room environment.
- The ability to ask questions and clarify their care plan.
- An easy way to access test results and personal medical information.
- A discharge plan that clearly explains a treatment plan.
- Electronic access to medication information.

The patient-centered care model stresses the need to empower patients to become active participants in their care, working together with their healthcare providers to identify and meet individual patient needs. (Reynolds, 2009) Healthcare providers must be able to effectively communicate with patients and families in order to get patients energetically involved.

The Shortcomings of Dry Erase Boards

In the last decade, many hospitals began utilizing dry erase boards in patient rooms to increase patient involvement and communication between hospital staff and patients. (Sehgal, 2010) But dry erase boards have not lived up to their potential for a number of reasons.

Primarily among them, nurses simply don't have the time to keep them updated. Bigger caseloads, shorter lengths of stay, and multiple job duties have reduced the amount of time nurses can spend at the patient bedside. Keeping a dry erase board updated from one shift to the next is a challenge in many busy nursing units. Hunting down lost markers and erasers takes even more time away from patients.

Dry erase boards also tend to wear out over time and need to be replaced every couple of years, a costly expense for something not being used.

The Benefits of Whiteboards

While effectively using dry erase boards fell short, the concept behind them is sound – and why increasingly hospitals are adapting that concept to a digital whiteboard format. Whiteboards were intended to provide a medium for staff to display pertinent information and updates in order to communicate more effectively. (Sehgal, 2010) In addition to improving patient engagement,

whiteboards can reduce risk of medical errors by visually displaying patient medication schedules, discharge information and pain scores. Patients can also quickly reference the care team's names and roles, helping them to more effectively communicate with the team and address any questions or concerns promptly. Whiteboards can lead to increased communication, patient engagement and HCAHPS scores. (Singh 2010)

Key Reasons to Use Digital Whiteboards

Technological advancements like interactive patient engagement solutions have helped numerous hospitals nationwide improve patient care. Interactive patient engagement solutions offer hospitals an easy way to incorporate digital whiteboards – without adding yet another platform that nurses must navigate. This modern solution for whiteboards can automatically be updated via a patient's electronic health record. This frees up nurses from spending time gathering patients' information and then manually updating boards. Nurses aren't wasting time looking for lost erasers or markers. Instead, they can spend their valuable time with patients, which has been shown to improve HCAHPS scores. (Ford, 2010) Digital whiteboards eliminate the need to order ongoing supplies and replace worn-out boards every couple of years, making the ROI appealing for hospitals. When choosing a digital whiteboard, hospitals should look for:

- A user-friendly dashboard for quick and easy updates;
- A user interface that is engaging and intuitive to the patient; and
- A solution that is integrated into the system nurses already are using throughout their shifts.

References

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About Allen Technologies

Allen Technologies, the pioneer of interactive patient solutions for 40 years, transforms the way hospitals engage, educate and entertain patients. Allen Technologies helps hospitals impact patient outcomes, improve patient satisfaction and achieve operational efficiencies. Allen's multiplatform interactive patient engagement system, delivered via television, tablet and bedside monitor, is a robust patient-centric portal for customized patient education, in-room comfort control, and entertainment. Allen is the leader in interactive patient engagement solutions for smart TVs. Allen's E3 Patient Engagement Solution integrates seamlessly with electronic medical records and system platforms including HVAC, housekeeping and food service systems. Learn more at www.engagewithallen.com, www.twitter.com/allen_IPS or www.facebook.com/allentechnologies.

Allen Technologies, Inc.
2100 Kramer Lane, Suite 250
Austin, TX 78758
512/258-7019

www.EngageWithAllen.com

August 2019