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On Demand

Interactive patient care systems help hospitals keep and retain top talent

By Kathy Levine

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For years, the nursing industry has reported high levels of job dissatisfaction due to poor scheduling, unrealistic workloads and hours, mandatory overtime and the lack of responsiveness to nurses' concerns. These issues have led to historically high turnover rates and an earlier retirement age among registered nurses. In 2007, Pricewaterhouse Coopers' Health Research Institute reported in a study addressing nursing performance and quality of care that the average nurse turnover rate in hospitals is 8.4 percent, with the average voluntary turnover rate for first-year nurses reaching an astounding 27.1 percent.¹



There are steps hospitals can take in-house to ensure a lower turnover rate, such as increasing their education services and nurse satisfaction levels with the implementation of an interactive patient care system. The implementation of emerging interactive technologies can empower staff, while increasing job satisfaction and decreasing stress.

Finding a Solution

With the baby boomer generation requiring more healthcare services, the declining number of nursing staff is responsible for more patients, resulting in an overloaded work force. In fact, according to a report from the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis, a high rate of nursing turnover has been linked to a prevalence of non-nursing tasks and a decrease in the time allotted for actual patient care.² Not only does this trend negatively affect the morale of nursing staff, it also equates to inefficient nonclinical workloads.

Clear Lake Regional Medical Center in Webster, TX, installed an interactive patient care system to maximize the shifts of nursing staff. Clear Lake, a 595-bed medical center, has experienced an increase in the quality of care nurses are providing to patients.

The survey/questionnaire and automated service recovery functions of interactive patient education systems allow nonclinical workflow to be directly routed to the proper department. Hospitals are able to customize surveys and questionnaires for their patients to gauge different aspects of the patient experience. Part of the implementation process of the survey involves setting up reporting functionality so that, when a patient answers a question, the answer is e-mailed to the appropriate department, allowing for proactive action on the facility's part.

Whether used for discharge management or a meal order delivered directly to the dietitian, workflow efficiencies are streamlined, leading to increased nurse satisfaction and energy levels. In many cases, the on-demand education systems become so ingrained from an operational standpoint that it becomes a part of standard of care.

Jayne Schaffer, BSN, RN, discharge nurse of surgical units, has experienced first-hand the benefits of Clear Lake's interactive system. "I discharge between six and 10 patients in an 8-hour time frame. I can show the programs to one set of patients as I am discharging and verbally instructing another," Schaffer said. "I find I have much more time to provide specific discharge instructions with the video on-demand films giving a comprehensive overview of the topics I need to instruct the patient or family with. It is a tool I use each and every day."

Staff Education

A rapidly changing healthcare industry and mandatory continuing education for nurses heightens the need for nurses to continuously expand their knowledge and skills. Even if staffing levels are sufficient to provide care, many nurses have not received enough on-the-job training to provide high-quality care. Research has associated formally educated nurses and positive work environments with significantly improved patient outcomes.

Additional development and training addresses the broader issue of self-worth for nurses as it pertains to the profession. Through continuing education courses provided via Clear Lake's on-demand education system, nurses can become more professionally competent, increase their knowledge base and meet state and other licensing/certification criteria. The system's ease of use, as well as its full facility access, removes the burden of traveling to receive CE credits and makes the experience much more accommodating to a busy schedule. Using an education system decreases the challenge nurses face when trying to stay up-to-date on trends and treatments, broadening their outlook and ensuring patients see a benefit reflected in their treatment.

Patient Education

Interactive learning delivered asynchronously on demand is a paradigm shift in the way patients are educated. Information is transferred through a television or monitor, a move away from traditional educational methods and presentations. Television has become an effective tool in expressing abstract concepts or ideas. By providing video education in synchrony in dual-sensory information, the stimulation achieves more optimal outcomes and aids in providing a more efficient means of the nursing staff's valuable time.

Susie Sonnier, MSN, RN, patient education coordinator, has a responsibility to ensure patients are receiving and retaining the proper information necessary to care for their condition.

"The on-demand education system has launched patient education to a new level since the incorporation in March of this past year. There are two buildings in our complex that have diverse services that create

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countless patient and family educational needs on a daily basis. As a patient education coordinator, I needed a time efficient and effective tool to place in the staff's hands to help me cover the enormity of needs and topics." Sonnier said. "Our system augments my education canvassing of these services and units so each patient has an opportunity for education and information regarding their condition. The staff utilizes this tool at the point of contact with patients, thus making them a more caring and efficient caregiver. Many patients and their families have expressed much satisfaction with this tool and the positive outcomes it provides."

An interactive patient education system has the ability to interface with an electronic medical record system, supplying the patients with educational programming directly related to their condition. This focused educational content empowers the patient and family to take an active role in the recovery process.

With nurses as the ultimate point-of-care professional within the hospital setting, educating and informing patients with an on-demand education system can greatly reduce the amount of time nurses spend answering questions concerning the patient's stay in the hospital. It also delivers the education at a time convenient for the patient, equating to several hours saved per work week and an environment for optimal patient care

Start Making a Difference Today

There are many ways hospitals can make a difference in their facilities. Take a close look at the educational system your hospital has in place. Is it applied efficiently? Does it have a positive impact on both the nurses' work environment and the patient's experience?

Begin researching the different types of educational systems available within the market place. Survey the nurses in the facility and find out what is needed to better serve patients, as well as increase their industry knowledge. By addressing workflow management, patient education and staff education proactively, the facility will see environmental improvements both now and in the future.

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