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EMRs and Interactive Patient Engagement Systems: A Valuable Partnership

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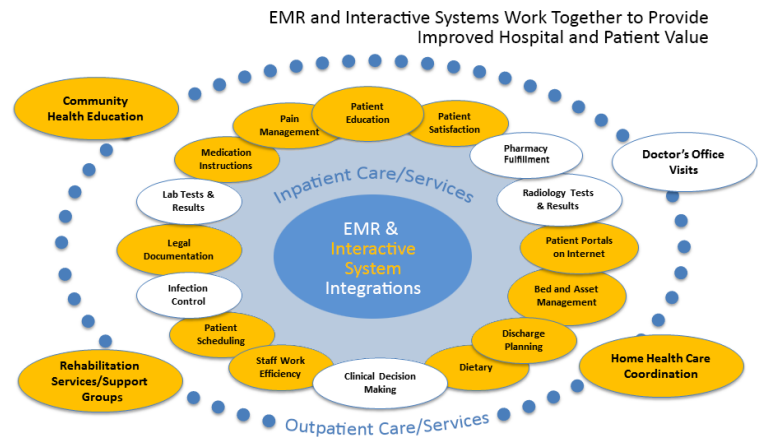
By: Kathy Levine

Electronic medical records (EMR) already perform a host of critical functions to streamline clinical workflows and thoroughly document patient care, but is there more that hospitals can squeeze out of them? With the extensive time and resources involved in a successful EMR implementation, hospitals are rightfully looking for even more ways to increase their EMR's productivity and overall value by integrating them with other hospital technologies.

An essential benefit of an effective EMR is that it coordinates and combines various healthcare tasks. This is often accomplished by fully integrating an EMR with a hospital's existing technology systems. Interactive patient engagement systems are like low hanging fruit when it comes to this type of effective integration. As we all know, interactive systems provide an array of services to patients and hospitals, such as on-demand education, nursing workflow efficiency, service recovery functionality, care team and hospital information as well as convenient access to various hospital services such as dietary/meal ordering and prescription fulfillment.

More and more hospitals are seeing the benefits of interactive systems and their potential interoperability with other hospital systems; their adoption has nearly tripled since 2010. Hospitals can take the efficacy and value of their interactive a step further with a custom interface with the hospital's EMR. Seamless communication and functionality between these two systems gives hospitals the opportunity to gain remarkable advancements in clinical workflow efficiencies and documentation of critical patient care information. For example, a hospital with an interactive patient education system might wish to identify a specific segment of their patient population to automatically educate them about their rights and choices on advance directives. Based upon parameters defined by the hospital, from information obtained in the EMR, the interactive system can be triggered to push patient-specific education and information as new medications, tests, or procedures are added to the patient's plan of care. Once the patient has successfully completed his or her education and potentially completed an assessment of their understanding, their participation and assessment scores can automatically be updated to their electronic patient record.

Nurses can also be electronically notified of such educational events or patient requests for additional consultation so that they may offer supplemental education utilizing the teach-back method. This simple process improvement can have a significant impact upon positive patient outcomes, satisfaction levels, and clinical workflows. Automations such as this allow clinicians to offer focused, follow-up education, freeing their time for other clinical tasks and offering patients a thorough approach to important health education.



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Furthermore, hospitals are seeking solutions to help utilize their technology in more meaningful ways and to further their commitment to cutting-edge technologies. By streamlining certain processes such as education delivery and documentation, survey deployment, and service recovery resolution, hospitals can effectively reduce the resources and paperwork formerly required to complete these tasks. In addition to these obvious benefits, hospitals can elicit critical informatics from the systems to benchmark various quality initiatives such as safety, communication, noise control, or room cleanliness to drive various improvements.

Integrating a hospital's EMR system with their interactive patient engagement system can also aid in setting patient expectations and fostering higher levels of satisfaction. Many hospitals are using their interactive systems to deliver welcome and orientation videos, patient scheduling and care plan information as well as visitor friendly hospital information like cafeteria or gift shop hours. Providing convenient, on-demand access to patient whiteboard and care team information or nice to know facts about dining or outpatient services helps patient's feel connected and sets the tone for delivering excellence in patient care. With a partnership between a hospital's interactive patient engagement system and their EMR, hospitals can make meaningful progress towards experiencing greater efficiencies and increased value from both their EMR and interactive systems.