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The Implications of the Electronic Medical Record on Bedside Shift Handoff

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Abstract

Patient care and hospital functioning rely on effective communication between healthcare teams and patients. Nurses on an adult acute care medical unit at Fletcher Allen Hospital in Burlington, VT, use bedside reporting at change of shift to promote communication among nurses and patients. Fletcher Allen Hospital introduced the electronic medical record (EMR) to increase interdisciplinary communication and provide accurate patient information in one location. Nurses on the unit were challenged to integrate the EMR with bedside reporting. The aim of this study is to explore the implications of the electronic medical record on bedside reporting on one adult acute care medical unit. A convenience sample of sixty nurses were invited to participate in an anonymous online survey that assessed the degree of implementation of both bedside reporting and the EMR, patient satisfaction of the interface, the effect on patient centered care, challenges that arose from the interface and suggestions for future improvements. Thematic analysis of the survey showed that there were logistical barriers, variation in processes (there were no uniform behaviors) and that change takes time. The electronic medical record has disrupted the practice of bedside report on this general medical unit; detracting from a practice intended to support patient centered care. Understanding the impact of implementing EMR in the context of the existing practice of bedside report, provides staff on the unit with the opportunity to evaluate the issue and determine if further changes are warranted.