

Effective communication



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HCOMM o What techniques have been most effective for sharing information and ideas? I work in a large hospital, where sharing knowledge is vital to success in quality patient outcomes. It is not rare for a large healthcare facility like the one in which I work to incorporate new knowledge sharing initiatives in these times. What my hospital is doing that is relatively uncommon is that they are taking these technologies a step further by providing a sort of networked system that is not independent and internal, but rather works as a sort of panacea for increasing fragmentation within the client care environment. For example, a patient suffering from a condition may have a complicated history in which they have seen many outside specialists and have already tried various treatments, and the delivery system has to know this. So what the hospital hopes to do is to install a sort of software based knowledge sharing system that will end this problem. o What techniques were ineffective? The issue of electronic knowledge sharing is relevant because today's healthcare environment is one that is quickly changing as new technology is constantly being adopted, and this technology brings risks as well as rewards. Patient privacy and confidentiality also remain relevant concerns from an ethical as well as a legal perspective in the healthcare environment. In today's healthcare setting, " Computer systems designed for clinical use apply technology that is protective of data. In addition, an electronic patient record is backed up according to hospital policy... and as the chart is modified by caregivers, those changes are automatically saved and an audit trail created" (Ford et al., 2005). But at the same time, this efficient means of keeping data could lead to possible compromises in patient confidentiality, because even encryption and passwords are not fool proof security systems. So what the hospital has to do

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is to integrate its systems in a way that respects this confidentiality. o How might these techniques be applied or modified in a healthcare work environment? The hospital's integration of technology and software is not just a closed proprietary system, but rather is part of a larger and more expansive network. This is a regional network that is fairly limited now, but there is room for growth as well. This also shows the future need to consolidate and improve the speed at which records can be accessed, as well as expanding the opportunities for access by creating a wider base of support and integration. o How can technology impact this process as well? An important new technology, developed in the last few decades and getting into common use presently and at the forefront of change at the hospital, is the use of the electronic health records, or EHR. EHR are used by many different types of healthcare delivery systems, from large capacity hospitals like the one I work in, which has over seven hundred beds, to private practice. By definition, " To be defined as an Electronic Health Record, an electronic approach to collecting storing and manipulating data must be able to accomplish: collection of patient health information and data, results management, order entry management, and decision support" (Ziel, 1998). Although this system often makes dealing with patient records more orderly and efficient, as noted above, some have raised concerns over how the process of keeping these electronic records relates to issues of patient confidentiality and privacy. Because there is so much more access to the information electronically, there is also more possibility that the information will wind up in the wrong hands. It is important to consider these possible risks as well as the benefits. REFERENCE Ford, E, N Menachemi, and T Phillips (2005). Predicting the adoption of electronic health records by physicians.

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