Facilitating the Use of Technology/CPRS Instruction Guide for New Nurses, Nurse Residents and Nursing Students

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Introduction and Background

In 1995, the VA launched a major reengineering of its health care system, which included use of information technology. The Computer Patient Records System (CPRS), implemented nationally throughout the Veteran Health Administration began in 1999. The benefits of this system have been transformative, improving communication, providing key information, enhancing clinical documentation, and providing quicker access to test and imaging results. New nurses, nurse residents and nursing students struggle to master this complex system, slowing them down and causing anxiety. Ability to rapidly master and competently navigate CPRS is crucial for all staff and especially important for new nurses, nurse residents and nursing students who have to assimilate into a new challenging and fast-paced atmosphere.

Method

The CPRS pocket guide, developed to orient new nurses, nurse residents and nursing students to the electronic medical record is being implemented at the Providence VA Medical Center. This pocket guide is designed to be utilized within the first two weeks of orientation under the direction of a preceptor. A colorful, laminated guide, the CPRS tool provides a systematic visual guide for the learner to follow. It can be transported to various localities or maintained at the computer of use. The approximate cost of the final revised product was fifty cents. The booklet will be revised and updated yearly.

Evaluation

The pocket guide was initially piloted with a new staff nurse who felt the tool was easy to use. Other staff, who cannot forget their initial experiences with the CPRS system, were receptive to the guide and agreed it will be beneficial and will ease the introduction to this unfamiliar system. Further testing of the CPRS guide is planned with the next rotation of nursing students in August. Additionally, the guide has been utilized as a prototype for other hospital services and is currently being adapted to meet the varied needs of new employees. Future plans include development of a computer program which will easily accommodate updates as the system evolves.

Discussion

New nursing staff, nurse residents and nursing students are initially overwhelmed by CPRS. Although the usefulness of the CPRS guide may be limited to the first few weeks of orientation, it will potentially be a beneficial support to alleviate anxiety and confusion for new nurses, nurse residents, nursing students and staff who float to units where the templates used are dissimilar to their own.