

Nurses' Perception of the Impact of the Use of Electronic Documentation Devices on the Nurse-Patient Relationship

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Introduction/Background

In 2015 Lifespan converted to a fully integrated EHR. Due to placement of documentation devices, nurses in some areas could not document in real time while facing the patient. Anecdotal information suggested that they were dissatisfied facing away from patients while documenting, and some reported an increase in the time required to document. The purpose of this research was to examine staff nurses' perceptions of the impact of electronic documentation devices on the nurse-patient relationship. No research examining the impact of EHR documentation on the nurse-patient relationship was found; although research in medicine was identified¹⁻³.

Methods

After reviewing the literature,¹⁻³ the team developed a survey to measure nurses' perception of the impact of the EHR and distributed it to all 726 staff nurses at The Miriam Hospital. The survey consisted of 38 Likert-response questions ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). The survey questions were constructed around identified themes including communication (12 questions), therapeutic relationships (12 questions), patient interaction (12 questions) and flow of care (2 questions). A sample of novice and expert nurses was also interviewed with open ended questions developed from the literature and survey findings. Interview data were reviewed for common themes, and responses were further classified as a positive, negative or mixed response.

Results

Of the 726 surveys distributed to staff nurses, 276 surveys were returned (38%). Average survey responses for the themes of communication, therapeutic relationship, patient interaction, and flow of care were 3.005, 2.916, 3.081 and 3.378 respectively. The team analyzed the electronically recorded open ended interviews using content analysis. Five themes emerged from the open ended interviews, including effect on therapeutic relationship/communication, effect on time spent with patients, documenting in real time, patients' perception of the EHR use and strategies used by nurses, including memory, paper and pencil, or structured paper handoff tools. Positioning relative to the patient was identified as an important factor which impacted the nurse-patient relationship. Nurses identified that EHR documentation presented both facilitators and obstacles to maintaining the therapeutic relationship. Most nurses did not believe that EHR documentation saved time, but did improve access to data. Nurses continued to rely on "other methods" when documenting in real time, including paper and pencil notes, creating documentation forms or memory. Nurses identified strategies they used to maintain a connection with the patient while documenting, including apologizing, scripting, using a mobile computer or postponing documentation

Discussion/Conclusion

Findings supported conclusions identified in the medical literature: EHR documentation presents both opportunities and challenges for providers.. Future aims include the development of targeted intervention strategies designed to promote effective use of electronic documentation devices by nurses.

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