Use of Mobile Application to Improve Nursing Department Communications

Paula Wolski MSN, RN-BC, Courtney Green BSN, RN, Diane Pessa MSN, RN-BC, Anh Le BSN, RN, Ellen O'Connor BSN, RN

Brigham and Women's Faulkner Hospital, Boston, MA

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Introduction/Background
Nursing leadership has struggled with the use of staff meetings as a means to share information. Staff meetings should ideally be used for higher-level nursing communication and to review unit-specific items. Literature searches using OVID and CINAHL databases revealed very little on the effectiveness of various types of communication tools for intradepartmental communication. A subgroup of our Nursing Informatics Committee reviewed potential electronic applications as solutions. The application Workspace was chosen to review and pilot based on familiarity with user interface and cost. Given Brigham Health license access there were no costs incurred for use.

Methods
After the application was chosen a mixed method survey was developed for the application's ease of use and impact on the end user. Members of the Nursing Practice Committee as well as the Nursing Informatics Committee were asked to volunteer to be part of a pilot group to validate this form of communication. All participants were asked to download the application onto their mobile device. A pre-implementation survey was sent to all participants. The application was used to communicate several practice changes or updates on new functionality within the Electronic Health Record (EHR). Surveys were then sent out at two weeks and four weeks post pilot start.

Results
The survey requested demographic characteristics of the participants. In addition, we asked questions related to the application itself in terms of ease of use and user acceptance. There were 13 participants in the pre-implementation survey and a total of 11 participants in survey 2 (7 participants) and 3 (4 participants). Attrition is more likely to occur in longitudinal studies and that could account for the decreased response rate with each survey. The general themes found in the survey were these: 1) Staff found the application easy to load onto their device; 2) They appreciated the ability to review at their own leisure; 3) They liked push notifications of new content; 4) Participants stated that opening attachments was easy; and 5) The majority stated that the application was an improved way to get updates. One participant stated that email would still be a better way to get communication. The application allowed the administrator to see how many viewed each post. The average was 17-22 viewers of a possible 24.

Discussion/Conclusion
The use of a mobile application to send updates on nursing practice and committee communication was found to be beneficial to most participants as only one participant preferred email. The pilot was considered a success even with a small data set. There continues to be a small subset of staff that prefers their communication via email, which points to the need for continued use of email. Next steps would include operationalizing the use of the application. All nursing staff with have the option to use email and not download the application. One discovery during this process was that many staff have an email address that is not BWH-specific and the need to resolve is ongoing.

References
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