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Implementing Mobile Technology to Enhance Communication Between Health Care Providers and Patient's Families

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OBJECTIVE

- Discuss successful implementation of the mobile application, 'EASE,®' in surgical and inpatient hospital settings to strengthen the communication between health care providers and patient's families.

BACKGROUND

- Enhancing communication reduces anxiety levels for hospitalized patients and families.
- Families desired an accessible and convenient method to connect with staff during their loved one's hospitalization.
- Mobile technology applications such as 'EASE,®' allow:
  - Family members to receive patient care updates
  - Caregivers to send notifications to designees with a smart phone
  - Instantaneous feedback and connection

REFERENCE

Gordon et al. (2015). Digital mobile technology facilitates HIPAA-sensitive perioperative messaging and improves physician-patient communication and streamlines patient care, *Patient Safety in Surgery*, (2015) 9:21 DOI 10.1186/s13037-015-0070-9

IMPLEMENTATION

Phase 1:

- Began in operating room (OR)
  - Initially focused on specialty areas
  - Used in OR cases > one hour
- Scripts developed based on specialty
  - Guided nurses on family communication
- Devices were:
  - Evaluated
  - Deployed
  - Programmed
- Electronic education completed by the vendor
- Clinical informatics provided 'at the elbow' support
- Expanded use to all surgical cases > one hour
- Engaged provider practices to introduce technology to patient and family by encouraging them to download the app pre-operatively
- Expanded use to other facility campuses offering surgical services

Phase 2:

- Successful project roll-out
- Expanded technology to procedural units and select intensive care units (ICUs)
- Developed scripts detailing patient post-op milestones
  - 'Breathing tube has been removed'
  - 'Sitting up in a chair for the first time'
  - 'Eating breakfast'
  - 'Taking the first walk of the day'
  - 'Ready to be transferred to a step-down unit'
  - 'Procedure ongoing'
  - 'Please return to waiting area to meet the physician'

Future State:

- Plan to implement in NICU, PICU and all adult critical care units
- Inpatient units – send text messages only; nurses exclusively send messages
- NICU will:
  - Send photos
  - Providers will also send messages

RESULTS

86,859
MESSAGES SENT

50–232
STATES – AREA CODES RECEIVED MESSAGES

9.6/10
POSITIVE USER EXPERIENCE RATING

95%	Strongly Agree, based on experience with EASE® they would recommend the hospital to others
95%	Strongly Agree, experience with EASE® demonstrates compassion and caring towards family members
87%	Yes, The availability of EASE® would influence your choice of hospital should you, or a loved one, require surgery
96%	Strongly Agree, My experience with EASE® showed a level of commitment to transparency and better communication by this hospital

QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

Patient Family Comments

"Informative, comforting, lessens your anxiety, and you can communicate with other family members who can't be here."

"This was the easiest way to keep the whole family informed without everyone being here. Was very easy to use. Thank you."

"Gave us peace of mind while we waited! Every hospital should offer this!!"

"This is the first time we experienced EASE® and love it. Every facility should have this system. It lets family know the patient's progress every step of the way. Great!!!"

"Awesome! Really put my mind at 'ease' during such an important procedure! Thank you!!"

BARRIERS

- Risk management - review and approve workflow and policies
- Nurse buy-in for additional tasks
- Surgeon/provider resistance for sharing updates

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- Intra-collaborative participation is essential
- Open communication with the vendor provides an enhanced product for patients and families

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