



Technology allows us to do what we do best

Is your experience similar to mine? I'm at work and have a critically ill patient surrounded by monitors, a vent, multiple lines and the patient is going downhill. I cannot leave the room, doctors are giving orders, labs are being sent, vital signs are changing as I intervene, and if anything is being written down, I'm usually doing it on a piece of paper, or even a paper towel. Sound familiar?

When I was in nursing school, no one really explained exactly how much of my job as a nurse involves paper pushing. But, if I had to estimate, I'd say I spend about 70% of my shift documenting and tracking patient data. The decisions being made for patient care are based on the data collected, and it's up to me to chart and record this information throughout my shifts and do so accurately. Yet manually recording patient data leaves so much room for error. Yet, no one wants inaccurate documentation. Not me, nor my patient.

This is where I've found that my experience with technology that automates patient data delivery and eliminates unnecessary paperwork not only allows me to do what I love best, which is one-on-one patient care, but also decreases the risk of human error, unnecessary transcription errors, and inaccurate reading of patient data.

As a self described "nurse nomad," I work at multiple hospitals in the Boston area. At each of the hospitals I work with I find them implementing varying levels of technology for patient care. At my more "tech-oriented" hospital, they have device connectivity, comprehensive EMRs (electronic medical records), and rolling laptops. I can scan a patient's ID band and then scan their meds to be sure that they're getting the treatment they need. In the critical care unit, if there's a code, I don't need to be running around tripping over wires trying to document every device readout; device connectivity technology makes sure that the patient's vitals are automatically saved and sent to the EMR for me to validate when I go to chart. I can quickly get a clearer, more accurate picture of what's going on with the patient, and more time to spend with them, talking to them, evaluating and treating them, which is so necessary for improved patient outcomes and a better patient/family experience.

So why are some nurses still wary of technology? Probably because they don't feel they have the time to learn new systems, or for that matter truly understand them or the subsequent benefits. But let's face it; manually recording patient data has many drawbacks. My personal experience tells me that it's becoming necessary to embrace technologies that will help us improve care. However, I also realize that technology companies could do more to help us and make adoption easier. This is why I recently decided to become an advisor to healthcare companies. One company I am currently working with is Capsule Tech, Inc., a provider of medical device connectivity. I am helping them with the design of their new solution that will soon feature positive patient association and auto-sensing; features that will further simplify our workflow, give us even more time with our patients and truly improve care and safety. I would encourage nurses to reach out to companies like Capsule and provide your feedback. After all, if we aren't telling them what they should do, aren't we partly to blame for technologies that are difficult to implement and only make our jobs harder?

From my perspective, using technology such as device connectivity means more job satisfaction and more accountability. Our job becomes more than just chasing paper, it becomes about providing the best nursing care for our patients. Ultimately, the patient is the winner as there is less chance for medical errors, and they receive better care as he or she gets most of my attention. The patient is happy, and my job is more meaningful as I get to do what I love best, and isn't that really what we all want as a nurse?

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