

Improving Care: Making the Change to Bedside Shift Reports

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Care coordination is an important part of safe and effective medical care, especially in hospitals. In broad terms, care coordination is the way systems, providers, and patients work together to provide appropriate and safe health care. Unfortunately, according to McDonald et al. (2010), there seems to be no standard definition of what care coordination actually entails. They explain that this is not surprising, given the number and varied types of individuals involved in patient care. However, McDonald et al. (2010) posit that the goal of care coordination is to “meet patient needs and preferences in delivery of high-quality, high-value care” (p. 7). This paper explores the practice of bedside shift reporting as a method to improve care coordination, and aims to show that bedside shift reporting is uniquely suited to meeting the previously stated goal. Because of its many benefits to patients, staff, and care organizations, bedside shift reporting should be standard practice.

What is a Bedside Shift Report?

Shift reporting is a vital part of patient care. When the new shift comes on, they need information about their patients from the staff about to leave the unit. Although shift reporting has been present as long as nurses have cared for patients, methods for shift reporting vary. According to Wiley (1975), different methods work for different units, depending on staffing and number of patients. Methods used in the past (and today) include: report given from off-going charge nurse to on-coming charge nurse; off-going shift and on-coming shift all gathering in one room to hear and give report on all unit patients; on-coming shift gathering in a room to hear report from either the off-going or on-coming charge nurse; individual nurses reporting to one another; on-coming staff listening to prerecorded shift report from off-going staff; and combinations of any of the above (Trossman, 2009; Wiley, 1975). Depending on the method of

report given, shift report “could last anywhere from 30 minutes to as long as an hour” (Trossman, 2009, p. 7).

Sand-Jecklin and Sherman (2014) describe miscommunication as a key factor in sentinel patient events. They explain that “a significant percentage of a nurse’s communications each day occurs during patient handoffs, and the safety of the patient can be compromised at this time” (p. 2855). As focus has shifted in recent years to safer patient-centered care, bedside shift reporting has become more common. Bedside shift reporting is a method of shift report where off-going staff and on-coming staff meet at each patient’s bedside to give and receive shift report for that patient. This method includes key players in the patient’s care: the off-going nurse, the on-coming nurse, and – most importantly – the patient.

Why Use Bedside Shift Reporting?

The goal of bedside shift reporting is to reduce miscommunications (and therefore sentinel events) by having the patient present to provide clarity and corrections during the transfer of their care. While patients clearly benefit from this method of shift report, it should also be noted that staff and organizations experience significant benefits as well. Sand-Jecklin and Sherman (2014) describe benefits shown in the literature as “improved patient satisfaction, improved nurse communication and shorter shift reports” (p. 2855).

Patient Benefits

Bedside shift reporting increases patients’ involvement in their own care and their perception of staff’s availability during shift change. In addition, the benefits patients experience from bedside shift reporting are the basis for the benefits experienced by staff and organizations.

Increases patient involvement. When shift report happens at the bedside, patients can participate. This allows them to ask questions, correct mistakes in report, and offer their

perspective and insight into their situation and care (Hastings, Suter, Bloom, & Sharma, 2016). Bedside shift reporting also allows family members to be present to hear updates about patient status (Hastings et al., 2016). This can translate to improvements in patient compliance to nursing interventions. Finally, being involved in their care planning gives patients clear expectations for their day, which can result in decreased call light use (Evans, Grunawait, McClish, Wood, & Friese, 2012).

Increases patient sense of staff availability during shift change. During the period of shift change, patients can feel as though they are unable to receive the help and attention they need from their caregivers. According to Trossman (2009), shift change is a time when some patients and family members feel their call lights are not answered in a timely manner and that they simply cannot get the attention of their nursing staff. Having shift change happen at the bedside would ensure that staff is present during the first 30 minutes of the shift to address any client needs (Evans et al., 2012).

Staff Benefits

As patients are better cared for, nurses experience less stress in their role as caregivers. This translates to time savings, more timely assessment of patients, and increased teamwork among staff members.

Saves time. According to Evans et al. (2012), bedside shift reporting decreases the time required for shift report, helps nurses more effectively prioritize their care, and allows them to more consistently leave the unit on time at the end of their scheduled shift.

Assures nurse visualization of patients at start of shift. A significant benefit of bedside shift reporting is the assurance that on-coming nurses will see each of their patients within the first 30 minutes of their shift (Trossman, 2009). Evans et al. (2012) explain that bedside shift

reporting allows on-coming nurses to visualize their patients rather than relying on a verbal or recorded report from their colleagues, which can potentially avoid adverse or sentinel events that may occur due to a change in patient status during or immediately before shift report.

Promotes teamwork between nurses. Because both on-coming and off-going nurses are present during bedside shift reporting, they can perform a brief patient and environment assessment together, allowing them to trouble-shoot problems or concerns jointly (Evans et al., 2012; Trossman, 2009). This collaboration helps develop an attitude of teamwork between nurses of differing shifts. In addition, it allows for additional mentoring and support of float, recent graduate, or new unit nurses (Trossman, 2009).

Organization Benefits

As patient care is improved and staff stress levels are decreased, patients are more satisfied with their care, they experience better healthcare outcomes, time and resources are used more effectively, and staff turnover is decreased.

Improved patient surveys. Increased patient satisfaction leads to better organizational results on Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems surveys (HCAHPS) (Sand-Jecklin & Sherman, 2014). This can directly impact healthcare reimbursement, leading to decreased costs for the organization.

Improved healthcare outcomes. Bedside shift reporting directly impacts overall healthcare outcomes for a unit. Because nurses are better able to prioritize their care, the most acute patients are able to be cared for immediately after shift report (Evans et al., 2012). In addition, safer care has been reported due to a decrease in medication errors and fewer discontinued orders being continued (Trossman, 2009).

Decreased amount of time wasted and overtime spending. According to Evans et al. (2012), bedside shift reporting decreases the amount of time nurses spend socializing during shift change. This in turn leads to off-going nurses leaving the unit at their scheduled time, which translates to a decrease in overtime spending by the organization. In addition, costs related to errors and their investigation are lower when fewer errors occur.

Improved staff satisfaction and retention. A significant benefit to organizations of bedside shift reporting is the improvement it causes in staff satisfaction. When staff feel more supported and less overwhelmed in their positions, they are less likely to leave the unit (Hastings et al., 2016). This means less time and resources will be spent interviewing and training new staff, and care will improve due to increased staff familiarity with processes and other staff members.

Concerns About Bedside Shift Reporting

While there are numerous benefits to bedside shift reporting, some legitimate concerns with the practice have been identified. These include concerns for patient privacy, hesitance of nurses to talk to their peers about the patient in their presence, patients who are sleeping during report, and lengthy reports due to requests or interjections from the patient (Evans et al., 2012; Hastings et al., 2016). Creative solutions can be found for each of the concerns mentioned above. For instance, patient privacy on units with shared rooms could be maintained by performing only introductions and discussion of non-private needs at the patient's bedside. Nurses who have information to share with the on-coming shift that they are uncomfortable sharing in front of the patient can spend a few minutes before or after the bedside shift report conveying this information to the next shift. Patient preference about being awakened during shift report can be obtained in advance to shift report, thereby allowing the patient the opportunity to decline

participating if they are sleeping during shift change. Finally, patient concerns and interjections can be minimized by ensuring that rounds are done shortly before shift change to ensure patients' needs are met and to educate them about the time constraints and purpose of the bedside shift report.

Conclusion

Clearly, bedside shift reporting has many benefits for the patient, staff, and organizations. Implementation of bedside shift reporting has been shown to improve important measures of care such as patient satisfaction, incidence of sentinel events, and teamwork and collaboration among nurses. When patients are more directly involved in their own care, improvements are seen in all areas of healthcare. It leads to decreased healthcare spending, improved HCAHPS results, and lower staff turnover. While there are legitimate concerns, each unit can address those concerns and come up with creative solutions to fit their patient population. Bedside shift reporting is an essential step in improving care coordination and healthcare outcomes. It truly meets the goal McDonald et al. (2010) proposed of "meet[ing] patient needs and preferences in delivery of high-quality, high-value care" (p. 7).

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