



Reducing Care Provider Burnout with Smarter Technology

The right advanced technology and integrated solutions, specifically designed for clinical care settings, can help streamline patient care – and decrease clinicians’ overwhelming heavy documentation workflows, giving back critical time where it matters – providing face-to-face patient care

Clinician burnout is fast becoming an epidemic in the US healthcare system. As noted in a recent *Medical Economics* survey, 68% of physician respondents reported feeling burned out at the moment, largely because of paperwork, regulatory demands and electronic health record (EHR) documentation.¹ Such feelings are not limited to doctors: Nurses, too, are reporting high levels of emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction.²

“Today, there are massive amounts of data we need to input and verify as part of our jobs,” said Brenda Smith, Director of Perioperative Services at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). “We spend so much of our day inputting or verifying information on our computers in our EMR or other systems. It often feels like most of our work involves meeting regulatory requirements as opposed to actually caring for patients. You can spend more time looking at the computer than you do your patient. It can lead to a lot of stress and, ultimately, burnout.”

As the leader responsible for scheduling and operating one of Pennsylvania’s busiest surgical services hospitals, Smith and her team were regularly bombarded with a



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number of clinical inefficiencies that made their jobs harder than they needed to be – and interfered with those vital patient-provider interactions. Something as simple as a fax machine running out of toner could throw the entire schedule off for the day as the entire process relied heavily on paper requests and paper-based workflows between the surgeons’ clinics and the acute care surgical services department. That meant more work – and more stress – for her team.

“There’s no bell or whistle that goes off when the fax machine is down,” she said. “But, that can mean a specialist’s reservation didn’t make it through to us. So, we later call to confirm and find out that the case is missing from the schedule, and we have to reshuffle everything. Scheduling the OR is like a huge Lego game.

You must put all the pieces together and, if those pieces you need aren’t on the board at the beginning, the whole thing falls apart. It can be really frustrating for the scheduling team, as well as for the doctors and patients.”

OR scheduling solution: Combining multifunction printers and integrated ‘smart’ apps

To help reduce these frustrations and, by extension, clinician burnout, UPMC decided to implement a smart solution for OR scheduling that uses a unique combination of multifunction printers and integrated applications. Previously, since their ambulatory EHR was not interoperable with their acute care EHR, they had to heavily rely on paper-based workflows to input and output critical patient information, surgical reservations and



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pre-assessment interviews with patients in order to ensure patients were scheduled and all prior labs and imaging order requisitions were completed prior to the day of their patient’s surgery.

Furthermore, they also had to previously rely on a mostly manual, paper-based process, involving schedulers inputting information into a variety of different systems to hit all regulatory requirements. To optimize the process, and reduce the possibility of miscommunications, Smith and her team moved to a new solution that enabled them to digitize all of their paper-intensive workflows, manage them in a digital queue and drag and drop the reservations directly into the OR schedule. She credits close collaboration between clinicians and UPMC’s information technology (IT) department with their ability to come up with a more efficient, digitized scheduling workflow.

“We worked closely with HP Inc., as well as nurses and other key staff members like Brenda to understand the best way to digitize some of these cumbersome workflows,” said Kimberley Challinor, an IT Manager in charge of UPMC’s enterprise print environment. “We knew the

process was inefficient and was resulting in a ton of unnecessary paper. But we also understood we needed to work directly with registration folks, physician offices and nursing units to improve it and really understand what data they needed and the best ways to share it.”

By working together and planning every step of the workflow, the team came up with a novel approach, using multifunction printers and cloud applications, to digitize important patient data and transmit it among different health and scheduling systems that could not “speak to” one another before. By “getting all the right people in the room,” and taking the time to truly understand the pain points, Challinor said, they were able to identify where an integrated, interoperable solution could solve the team’s biggest scheduling issues.

The move to this new scheduling system, Smith said, has resulted in a remarkable increase in morale and productivity across clinical staff in the OR. She added that the ability to use multifunction printers – standard equipment that can be found across the hospital that accommodates print, scan, fax, copy and email – is “invigorating and liberating,” allowing her to do more in less time.

“By making these processes more efficient, we are giving clinicians back their time – and that’s time they can then spend taking care of patients and managing to have a better work-life balance,” said Smith. “When I walk around my unit and see my nurses interacting with the patients, making eye contact and having real conversations, I know it makes a difference. As clinicians, that’s what we want to do: take care of our patients, not spend the majority of our time fighting with our technology. It helps in fighting those feelings of burnout.”

HP is reinventing solutions to connect human intuition, compassion and knowledge for the next generation of healthcare providers. [Learn more](#) about how advanced multifunction print technology can improve workflow in efficiencies and prevent provider burnout.

References

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