Lancaster Health Group Improves Resident Care with Mobile Point-of-Care Charting

Lancaster Health Group

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– Kimberly Clawson
Marketing Director
Lancaster Health Group

Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) at Lancaster Health Group's healthcare and rehabilitation centers can spend less time filling out forms and more time caring for residents thanks to a mobile Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system running on the Socket SoMo® 650Rx handheld computer.

Using EMRs at the point of care enables CNAs to efficiently document patient assessments, medications administered, activities of daily living, and other records that are required from nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. Detailed documentation is needed not only for state and federal audits, but also for billing, Medicare reimbursement, and industry accreditation.

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The SigmaCare EMR application, developed by eHealth Solutions, also allows CNAs instant access to look up patient records, nursing care plans, medical references, and other critical data anywhere within a facility.

DOCUMENTATION CHALLENGES
Nursing documentation has become a significant administrative challenge for organizations throughout the long-term care industry. Not only are record-keeping requirements continually increasing, they are also getting more and more complex. As a result, nursing documentation has become a burden for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) and other frontline caregivers at long-term care facilities throughout the U.S. CNAs typically spend a significant portion of each work shift taking notes and completing paperwork instead of directly caring for residents.

"One of the challenges in the long-term care industry is that we're constantly faced with more and more documentation and more and more regulations," said Kimberly Clawson, marketing director of Lancaster Health Group. "We realized that we could drown in paper, or we could move to an electronic system."

MOVING TO AN ELECTRONIC SYSTEM
With six nursing and rehabilitation facilities and over 1,000 beds, Lancaster Health Group needs to regularly create and manage a high volume of nursing documentation. Like most long-term care providers, the organization was doing all of its nursing documentation with pen and paper. Paper-based processes, however, are inherently slow and prone to inaccurate and incomplete information. Additionally, many organizations keep documentation in large, heavy binders, which are difficult for CNAs to lug around when busy tending to residents, and generally only accessible by one department at a time.

Now, when CNAs at Lancaster Health Group need to record activities of daily living, medications administered or other nursing activities, customized forms are easy to

access directly at the point of care on the SoMo 650Rx, a wireless medical PDA made with antimicrobial plastics fore use in patient care applications. The SigmaCare software automatically alerts CNAs when assessments are due or when data is incomplete, thereby ensuring greater compliance to documentation requirements. After documentation is completed on the SoMo, it can be sent wirelessly to the organization's central database, thereby providing all clinical staff with the latest patient charts and ensuring continuity of care.

So far, the company has deployed 120 units of the SoMo at four of its facilities, and expects to roll out a total of 150-200 devices when finished implementing at all of its sites.

"The SoMo helps us do our work in a more efficient manner. It helps us with our overall productivity and with better utilization of our staff time," Clawson said. "We can document things more quickly and in real time, allowing us to spend more time with patients rather than doing paperwork."

CHOOSING THE RIGHT HANDHELD COMPUTER

When Lancaster Health Group first tested the mobile EMR solution from eHealth Solutions, they found the SigmaCare software application suitable for its needs but not the mobile device eHealth Solutions recommended — an industrial-grade handheld from a leading manufacturer. Lancaster Health Group worked with CDW, a top provider of business technology solutions, to evaluate devices from other manufacturers, including Socket Mobile.

"The original device that SigmaCare recommended had a lot of features that we don't need, and it was much larger. It's twice the size of the SoMo and was cumbersome to lug around," Clawson remarked. "The SoMo is small enough for our CNAs to carry while they are caring for residents. It makes documenting these services much easier."

Price was a significant factor too. "The recommended device was too costly. We could buy two SoMo devices for every one of the other handheld," Clawson added. "The payback of the SoMo made a lot more sense for us."

ACCESSING CRITICAL DATA ANYWHERE

Besides improving the efficiency of nursing documentation, the mobile EMR solution provides CNAs with access to residents' charts at all times, enabling them to make smarter decisions when residents need an intervention, treatment, or other type of care.

Because the complete chart is always available, caregivers can instantly refer to potential allergies, advance directives, and medicines, which helps them make better decisions on the spot.

SoMo 650Rx handheld computer running SigmaCare software

"Having critical information at the time of an intervention is potentially life-saving."

—Kimberly Clawson
Marketing Director
Lancaster Health Group

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Transitioning from a paper to electronic system has transformed how Lancaster Health Group operates.

"By implementing an EMR system throughout all of our facilities, we are moving from the 19th century to the 21st century," Clawson explained. "This represents a huge culture change for us, but it is essential for our business, because regulatory agencies only ask for more paperwork each year, not less."

Lancaster Health Group has won multiple Five Star Ratings from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid for superior health inspections, staffing, and quality measures. Lancaster Health Group also received the 2006 Optima Award from *Nursing Home / Long Term Care Management Magazine* for organizations that go beyond common industry practice to provide optimum quality of care.

CHALLENGE

Document nursing activities electronically at the point of care

SOLUTION

• Socket SoMo 650Rx handheld computer
• SocketCare™ Premium enhanced service program
• SigmaCare software from eHealth Solutions

RESULTS

• Increased efficiency of nursing documentation
• Improved compliance to documentation requirements
• Higher Medicare reimbursement
• Improved quality of care through increased time spent in direct care of residents
• Real-time access to medical records and references enables smarter decisions at the point of care and improved continuity of care

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