Piece by Piece: Disseminating Change Toolkits as an Effective Communication Strategy During EHR Implementation

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Background
The transition from paper documentation to an electronic health record (EHR) is a catalyst for immense change and mandates well-planned tactics for information dissemination. To complete this transformation, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center devised a series of toolkits that showcased high-impact changes in the day-to-day tasks of ultimate end users with the new EHR. The toolkits were sets of materials on specific topics and concepts designed to prepare clinicians for the inevitable changes to the institution’s health information technology capabilities. Informatics Resource Nurses (IRNs) from both clinical and nonclinical areas were tasked with personalizing the delivery of the same essential information in each toolkit to ensure transparency during implementation.

Process of Implementation
• Toolkits served as a bridge to simulated trainings that paralleled the approach to the EHR go-live date and were formatted to capture the major changes with and benefits of the new EHR, particularly those that endorsed patient safety and high-quality care, standardization of data entry and retrieval, and real-time data exchange.
• Every month, a new toolkit was presented to the IRNs during scheduled meetings. The IRNs were then accountable for disseminating the toolkits to their respective areas and centers.
• The nursing leadership team used attendance trackers to monitor staff participation in and adherence to implementing institutional best practices for adopting the new EHR.
• A survey was completed by the IRNs to evaluate the effectiveness of the toolkits in information acquisition and dissemination.
• A descriptive analysis of the data collected using the survey identified areas for improvement with regard to information sharing.

Objectives
• Engage end users during the institution-wide journey by providing incremental glimpses of the new EHR that demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of device integration, streamlining communication, and integrating platforms for all areas of care.
• Help end users see the ways in which the shared and integrated EHR will help them provide better patient care and decrease time in performing day-to-day tasks.

Implications for Advancing the Practice
• Attendance trackers revealed that more than half of the 75 areas and centers in this institution maintained a compliance rate of 100% for each toolkit.
• The IRN survey indicated that 75% of the 194 respondents felt that the toolkits promoted awareness and understanding of the new EHR, which increased stakeholder buy-in and commitment to the future state of health information management.
• IRNs believe the toolkits provided a holistic view of nursing workflows throughout the continuum of care, which increased their confidence in serving as ambassadors for the change enablement team as a result of previous exposure and familiarity with OneConnect, the front-end application client for the new EHR.

Conclusions
EHR implementation and acclimation at a large institution demand interdisciplinary collaboration to promote open channels of communication and support for the change process among all stakeholders. As change agents, the empowered IRNs play a fundamental role in facilitating effective information sharing with their peers and have shown that the toolkit increases end user readiness during the transition to the new EHR.

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