

# Leveraging Modern Communication Technologies to Improve Workflows

Successful clinical workflows enable doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals to coordinate effectively and provide the best quality care for patients.

Communication between team members must flow flawlessly whether they work in the same department, across the hospital, or even different locations, and it must deliver actionable data and context.

This can't be easily accomplished with legacy tools like pagers. Instead, modern Clinical Communication & Collaboration (CC&C) platforms that leverage the use of mobile devices and secure texting, video, and data-sharing technologies must be adopted to ensure the relevant information gets to the right person in real-time.

Gaps in communication drive the majority of medical errors. In 2021, there were 1,197 sentinel events reported to The Joint Commission – the highest annual level since 2005. The organization linked communication failures as a top contributing factor for sentinel events such as falls and delays in treatment. It is a fact that delays and other miscommunication between hospital employees lead to inefficient and sometimes dangerous patient care.

CC&C platforms eliminate gaps in communication, forming the foundation for collaboration between caregivers, allied health, administrative users, and patients. By improving the exchange of information through integrations with EHRs, role-based scheduling tools, and nurse call systems and patient monitors, CC&C platforms enable care teams to streamline workflows and respond to rapidly changing scenarios.

## Assessing Key Technologies to Improve Workflows

Modernizing communication technology and improving clinical workflows can lead to fewer sentinel events, reduced lengths of stay, and better patient outcomes. Key capabilities to assess in a CC&C solution include:

- **EHR integration.** 61% of physicians find that EHRs negatively affect their workflow. A modern CC&C solution takes this into account and makes it simple to securely access and add information to EHRs and share relevant information such as lab alerts. Integrating a CC&C solution with the EHR and other systems unifies communication, making it the cornerstone of streamlined clinical workflows.
- **Roles-based shift handoff.** Ensuring continuity of patient care between day shift and night shift nurses, on-call physicians, and other healthcare professionals is essential. Role-based workflows ensure that critical information is not lost between shifts.
- **Automated on-call scheduling.** Many hospitals still rely on whiteboards and binders to coordinate schedules, making it difficult for staff to know who's on-call. Automated on-call physician scheduling software integrated with a CC&C not only makes the schedule readily available on staff smartphones or desktops, but it also makes it easy to reach who's on-call by role.
- **Nurse call integration with alarm management and event notification middleware.** Sending every patient monitor alert to an RN can lead to alarm fatigue, unnecessary clinical interruptions, inefficient workflow, and even burnout. Instead, non-priority alerts (such as beverage or blanket requests) can be routed to allied health. Nurse call alert systems with alarm management middleware filter out false alarms, streamline nurse call workflow with real-time, prioritized triage. If the primary nurse is unavailable, alerts will auto-escalate to the next care team member to ensure critical alerts are not neglected.
- **Activation of rapid response teams.** There's no time to waste when a patient is in a code situation requiring urgent attention. A modern clinical communication solution includes a fast and efficient way to notify specialists or coordinate rapid response teams, ideally through role-based, secure messaging with priority alerts. Nurses can quickly get help at the patient's bedside with one click.

- **Patient communication and engagement.** Following up with patients is crucial within the first two days of a hospital visit to avoid post-discharge readmissions, which can be expensive and negatively impact a patient's progress. A CC&C solution delivering HIPAA-compliant, two-way communication with patients and their families can help ensure care plan adherence. Text and video check-ins that enable patients and physicians to share documents, photos, and videos securely further ease the stress on both patients and clinical teams.

## Why Invest in an Integrated Communication Platform?

Modernizing healthcare communication technology can seem daunting, but delaying investment comes with ever-growing risks to patient safety, staff dissatisfaction, and a hospital's bottom line. By bringing communication and data from multiple systems together into a single, user-friendly solution, a CC&C platform reduces administrative burden, and it can lower risk by easing alarm fatigue, accelerating patient care, and reducing medical errors.

The dramatic improvement hospitals experience to clinical workflows after adopting a CC&C solution also leads to improved quality of care, greater patient and provider satisfaction, and, ultimately, cost savings and higher hospital revenue.

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