



New supply system allows nurses more patient care time

Time is a commodity nurses will tell you they can't have enough of.

So when Altoona Regional introduced a computer-aided supply management system that allows nurses to spend more time caring for patients than sifting through cluttered supply closets, it received rave reviews.

The PAR Excellence system was launched at Altoona Hospital Campus in August, and soon will be in almost every nursing supply closet in the system.

"Simply stated, the PAR Excellence system allows nurses to devote 100 percent of their attention to doing what they do best — caring for patients," said Vince Georgiana, cart supply supervisor

for the Supply Chain department (formerly Materials Management). "If my mom or dad were in one of these hospital beds, I'd feel better knowing that the supplies the nurses need to care for them are available fast and are easy to get to."

Immaculately organized

PAR Excellence supply rooms are immaculately organized with three large, wall-mounted racks holding rows of nursing supplies neatly in easy-to-view plastic bins. On each tray is a nickel-sized metal button called an iTag, which electronically stores the type and amount of the item in the bin.

On the wall is a PAR Display Board with electronic screens.

Cathy Dillen, R.N., quickly fills and records her supply needs before returning to her patients.

Each screen shows a patient's name and assigned room, and includes similar metal buttons, called iButtons, for every patient.

The nurse walks into the supply room, picks up a touch probe that looks like a TV remote control and touches the iButton under the patient's name on the PAR Display Board. He or she then touches the iTag on the bin from which each item is collected for that patient's care.

When finished, the nurse returns the touch probe to the system's "downloader port" and the information goes instantly into a computer that records the used items and recognizes when it is time to restock them. This system also keeps track of the cost of supplies used for each specific patient.

Nurses like easy-to-use system

Gary W. Zuckerman, vice president of Supply Chain, first saw the system while working in a Baltimore-area hospital and says the results speak for themselves.

"Quite frankly, there are few automated systems that live up to their hype of making processes more efficient and accurate," he said. "I haven't found any others that are as simple and straightforward as Par Excellence."

Both Gary and Vince have received overwhelming approval from nurses who have used the system.

Angela Davies, R.N., says that along with being easy to learn and use, PAR

Excellence provides peace of mind about nursing supplies.

"I feel more secure that we won't run out of things, especially on the weekends," she said.

Clinical Manager Bonnie Neal, R.N., says the system has taken the burden off nurses for ordering and storing supplies.

Dottie Fulton, R.N., said the system removed the clutter and uncertainty from the supply closet, and noted that "running out of an item is a thing of the past."

In the end, the focus of the PAR Excellence initiative is on the patient by recognizing that the less time nurses spend searching for supplies, the more time they can spend at the bedside.

For more information on PAR Excellence, visit parexcellencesystems.com

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