

Transforming Discharge Planning through Nursing Led Innovation in the Electronic Health Record

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BACKGROUND

- Timely, well-coordinated discharge planning is essential for delivering patient-centered care and achieving operational efficiencies
- Clear roles and responsibilities within the discharge process reduce variation and improve consistency
- Nurses identified opportunities to streamline workflows and enhance communication through redesign of the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) discharge planning tools

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

The current discharge process relied on outdated documentation tools and workflows that:

- Created inefficiencies and inconsistent planning across shifts
- Required nurses to navigate outdated task lists not aligned with current workflows
- Lacked a centralized, intuitive tool to guide discharge planning and documentation
- Increased risk for missed steps, delayed discharges, and inconsistent communication between interdisciplinary teams

Project Goal:

Create a unified, intuitive EMR workflow that improves consistency, reduces cognitive load, and supports clear communication during discharge planning.

METHODS

- Held a design session with nursing leaders and bedside nursing from all 8 hospitals in the system
- Consolidated tasks into a single “Prep for Discharge” view
- Removed 18 outdated tasks that no longer supported the discharge process
- Items were added to create clarity to tasks that needed to be completed day(s) prior to discharge
- Information was organized in a logical order to help guide discharge workflows

RESULTS

- **Streamlined Design:** With fewer sections, the updated documentation helped nurses focus more efficiently on discharge planning and the discharge process
- **Enhanced Clarity:** New sections were added to create clarity and highlight items that need to be completed prior to discharge
- **Shift-based Use:** Nurses can use the documentation section during each shift to proactively manage discharge preparation, reducing last minute tasks for the discharging RN
- **Time-based organization:** Content is organized chronologically to better support and guide workflows

Since Go-Live (April 2025):



Saved nurses over 1 million clicks in EMR



Saved nurses over 300 hours of documentation time



Saved 37.5 (8-hour) Nursing Shifts



Reduced time from discharge order to discharge

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

- Resistance to new tools
- Limitations within the EMR
- Nurses hesitant to adopt another tool
- Unsure how to embed other tools to interface



LESSONS LEARNED

- Engaging frontline staff early in the design was critical for adoption
- Clear role definitions helped reduce duplication and foster accountability through the discharge process
- Employing shift-based planning supports proactive, upstream discharge readiness
- Integrating education into governance structures further promotes adoption and sustainability
- Nurse led innovation can transform complexities in discharge workflows in large, multi-hospital systems
- Aligning technology and clinical practice is key

REFERENCES

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Order to Discharge Time (Minutes) — Regions

