

Relationology – Using Technology to Build Relationships

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Electronic Medical Records (EMR) provide a way to integrate relationships with technology.

EMR opens many doors to improved patient-physician relationships.

What stands in the way of your ability to develop meaningful clinical relationships with your patients? Medical records are vital to high quality continuity of care; but for many physicians, they also represent an administrative and legal burden – a time-consuming chore that hinders the chance to build meaningful relationships with patients. All that can change with the integration of electronic medical records (EMR).

It takes courage to adopt an EMR system. As with any new technology, it can be challenging to select, to buy, and to learn. Our motivation, however, transcended the challenge, because we were committed to provide high quality clinical care, and still have time to build relationships. We looked for “relationology,” ways to integrate technology to benefit our relationships in all their potential dimensions.

We’ve been using an EMR system in our family practice for more than three years, and the benefits to building relationships have been beyond our expectations. For example:

- Whenever I enter a room, I can make eye contact with the patient and welcome them appropriately because I know that everything (lab results, vitals, PMH, medicine lists, etc.) I need for the encounter is just a mouse-click away. In short, I enter the room ready to listen.
- I can make sure that I address all the issues the patient reported to my medical assistant.
- My notes are more complete since I can clarify and document exactly how the patient describes their complaint or concern.
- I develop trust with the patient because they often watch what I am typing and know what is in their chart. The computer screen helps to create a more interactive environment as patients participate in the creation of the data in their charts.
- Because I don’t have to spend a lot of time dictating a note, I can spend more time discussing the diagnosis and plan.

Physician relationships have also improved, both in the office and out. In the office, the use of EMR has helped the physicians develop a consistent approach to patient management. It also helps prevent the frustration of not being able to read each other’s writing, or find the information because of style differences. Also, because we are more efficient in seeing our patients, we have been able to consult each other more frequently which improves medical management of patients as well as teamwork. We can also provide our consultants with detailed notes even when they are to be seen the same day, because we are completing the notes at the point of contact.

Another tremendous impact the EMR has had in our office is in the relationships between physicians and staff. Our medical assistants and clinical staff are more much involved in patient care. They take great pride in obtaining a complete and

EMR allows physicians more time to focus on their patients.

pertinent history. This has improved staff relationships with the patients, which has in turn improved relationships between the patients and physicians. We also use email to maintain clear communications between the clinical and clerical staff. Phone messages can be prioritized and handled more efficiently. All of this enables us to focus on building relationships with patients.