



# Tightening the inconsistencies in patient care

How to prevent mistakes by improving hospital communications

# INTRODUCTION

Communication is at the heart of the medical profession. Not only do healthcare workers need to communicate with patients empathetically, they need to communicate with each other effectively.

However, as hospitals have complex infrastructure and managerial processes, quick and efficient internal hospital communication is not always viable. There are multiple people and departments involved in a patient's internal hospital care and it is not uncommon for different departments to use varied methods of communication. As a result, information silos form between departments impacting patient throughput and overall care. While this need for efficient communication is clear it is rarely addressed, directly impacting how and when a patient is dismissed.

If hospitals lack the infrastructure to communicate quickly, there are many negative implications that not only affect hospital operations and costs, but patient lives. However, as technology advances so do the systems available to hospitals today. In this eBook, you'll learn how communication silos are affecting bedside care; how capacity management systems removes communication gaps and provide your facility the tools to improve overall patient experience.

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A photograph of a middle-aged man with short, graying hair, wearing a white lab coat over a light blue shirt and a patterned tie. He has a purple stethoscope around his neck and is looking off to the side with a serious, thoughtful expression. In the background, a woman with dark hair is partially visible, looking towards the camera. Another man in a suit is visible in the far background, holding a clipboard. The scene is set in what appears to be a hospital or medical office.

# **TIGHTENING THE INCONSISTENCIES IN PATIENT CARE**

**HOW TO PREVENT MISTAKES BY IMPROVING  
HOSPITAL COMMUNICATIONS**

# THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN HEALTHCARE

Communication is a crucial component in all steps of the healthcare process and is fundamental to ensuring every person involved in patient care, from Doctor to orderly, has the required information they need to appropriately care for patients.

As patient care involves many moving parts across multiple departments, systems, and people, accessing real-time patient data is vital to providing the appropriate care to patients. However, common centralised hospital systems lack the immediate and automated functionality to relay the correct information to the appropriate hospital staff, fast.

These systems, when used for communication, create a negative domino effect which can not only hurt patient waiting times, care, health and general safety but increase hospital operational costs and processes.





## THE IMPACT OF INADEQUATE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Indirect or unclear communications can cause delays in patient care, decrease operational efficiency, and fluctuate hospital costs. Not only that, but the miscommunication of care or diagnosis can greatly impact patient well-being.

In the United States, poor communication has been a factor in 1,744 patient deaths and over \$1.7 billion in malpractice costs nationally in the past five years.

In Australasia, the statistics are no less alarming. In Australia alone, it is estimated that as many as 18,000 people die every year because of medical error, while 50,000 people suffer permanent injury.

It is not uncommon to see hospitals struggle to appropriately manage and quickly relay vital patient information to corresponding staff during handover. While communication is a vital part of any medical profession, it is not the only part, and as such the deliverance of key communication can sometimes get lost in the abundance of other critical, and urgent tasks. In a fast-paced environment, such as a hospital, this can cause critical problems that can result in fatal outcomes.

When simple communication doesn't happen or is unclear, this creates a time delay in required action - a negative space between what should happen and what has happened. Not because the medical workers are inadequate to perform the required task, but because they lack the immediate information needed to do so. What this causes is inconsistency and inefficiency in task management. And as more staff, communication methods, and departments get thrown into the mix of a patient's care, this 'negative space' of inconsistent communication grows further, causing additional delays to patient care.

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1. According to a study published in [FierceHealthcare](#)

2. According to research outlined in [ABC News 'The World Today'](#)

# SIMPLIFYING THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS: HOW INTERNAL HOSPITAL COMMUNICATIONS ARE CHANGING

This inefficient practise of communication management is the negative space that clouds efficient patient care in hospitals today. Mainly, because governing hospital systems were designed to host data, not efficiently display, and communicate it.

While powerful in their function, these systems are inadequate in performing the fast-paced communication medical staff need to attend to patients quickly. Therefore, medical staff often use additional communication devices such as pagers, email and SMS to immediately update patient information to the appropriate person when required.

These devices act as a band-aid to cover communication inefficiencies growing the negative space between internal hospital communications and adding further issues of their own:

1. SMS, pagers, and email content are not accessible to all staff tending to a patient. While they can deliver vital communications instantly, this method of point-to-point communication requires multiple messages to be sent to multiple people instead of a single message to all patient carers. This disparate method of communication can delay patient care and negatively affect patient outcomes. For example, while an email may be sent directly from a nurse to a doctor it does not get documented at a large scale, causing inconsistency in patient information and thus, creating delays in treatment or even causing mistreatment.
2. Third-party telecommunication providers aren't always secure. Confidentiality is vital in the medical profession however, using third-party communication services mean hospitals and doctors are not in control of their patient data. By relying on third-party security systems, patient confidentiality is put at risk.

As technological advancements have increased, so have the tools available to medical institutions to manage these communication bottlenecks.



## **INTERNAL HOSPITAL COMMUNICATION: A DRIVER FOR BETTER CAPACITY MANAGEMENT**

Enriching patient care relies on seamless, transparent and real-time internal hospital communication. Effectively managing internal hospital communication also provides a layer of visibility that allows healthcare providers to better manage capacity. Utilising technology specifically designed for the complexities, limitations and requirements unique to clinical healthcare will enhance collaboration, knowledge sharing, and ultimately help hospitals to increase efficiency and accuracy.

Capacity management software solutions are specifically designed to overcome the native space created by inefficient communication methods and provide real-time visibility into patient status from admission to discharge.

### **What is a capacity management software solution?**

A capacity management solution is a suite of software tools supported by clinical consultants, designed to help healthcare providers surpass common communication bottlenecks in patient management and internal hospital communication. Capacity management tools assemble data from existing systems to give you a clear overview of the resources you need to effectively run your hospital. With a capacity management tool you will be able to accurately forecast the resources needed for demand planning so you can align resources, schedule staff and accelerate patient flow. Designed to help medical staff streamline and efficiently manage patient data, capacity management software solutions are helping medical practises in both Australia and New Zealand more successfully communicate all areas of a patient's care in real-time.



# WHAT TO CONSIDER IN A CAPACITY MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

Not all capacity management tools are created equal, like any software solution you need to understand your pain points to sufficiently reduce them.

Identifying pain points can be a complicated process, especially if you are managing or looking to optimise a large hospital framework. As aforementioned, defining the problem is the key. The best way to find a solution is to research:

- **Outline the steps involved in patient care.** Each hospital has its own process to manage patient care - define yours. Outline how a patient is admitted, transferred, cared for and discharged.
- **Interdepartmental issues.** What's prohibiting each department from efficiently attending to patients? Evaluate: time of day, number of staff, time of communication vs time of action.
- **Cross-departmental issues.** Are there any delays caused between departments caring for a single patient? What are they?

Tertiary hospital, Health Sciences of Winnipeg located in Central Canada were struggling with patient throughput, communication silos and resource planning when they approached HealthStream to learn more about the Enterprise Visibility™ capacity management system. The hospital had a clear understanding of the challenges they were facing and as a result were able to identify and implement the right solution much faster.

Until you can clearly identify well-defined pain points, keep asking who, what, when, where and why? It may seem obvious, but once you can clearly identify your problem it will be easier to identify your solution.

# CONCLUSION

Managing patient care doesn't need to be complex anymore. Capacity management systems are the solution. By utilising your past data, capacity management systems will make patient demand forecasting simple by providing accurate detail on the resources you need to provide the best care. They'll help you to understand patient demand and decrease communication silos and they'll offer detailed insight into your hospital's operations. Overall your hospital will become more efficient, and more importantly, patient care will improve.



## HOW HEALTHSTREAM CAN HELP

Helping hospitals and healthcare institutions globally, our team of experts understand professional medical pain points and have the knowledge and technical solutions to solve them.

If you're looking to advance your institution's medical processes and ensure patients receives consistent, quality care, [please reach out](#) to the HealthStream team. With a wealth of medical software solution experience, we are confident we can help.



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## About HealthStream

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