

Hilltop Estates implements electronic medical records

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Private skilled nursing facilities like Hilltop Estates aren't required to switch from paper to electronic health records.

Nonetheless, the facility plans to launch its new electronic system Wednesday (today) when doctors and physician assistants can access health information by touching a keyboard.

"If you're not at the table, you're part of the menu," quipped Hilltop administrator Scott Bahe about the change.

What that means, Bahe said, is that success will be eluded if health care providers are not interested in improving quality of care by partnering with physicians and other providers.

"We want to increase quality of care and optimize workflow," he said about the change.

Hilltop actually implemented a cloud-based electronic health record system May 1. Physicians gained access to the system Wednesday.

Bahe noted that implementation, without assistance from federal grant programs, gives residents a higher continuity of quality of care.

Before, when medical procedures or prescriptions were needed, Bahe said forms were faxed to physicians to sign and send back.

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“Now ideally, a physician can log in and sign the order,” he explained. “By logging in, it validates his or her signature.”

At Hilltop, direct-care staff input patient information into eight kiosks throughout the facility.

“That will eliminate medication errors,” Bahe said about the chance of errors happening with written records.

Charge nurses will put in information about patients on new laptop computers.

Bahe said the decision to go electronic came about from Hilltop’s leadership team.

“They started talking about it last fall and looked at systems, decided to do it and dove in,” he said.

The accounting side of the system was completed last October followed by the installation of hardware and software.

Hardware cost \$50,000 with \$15,000 spent on software training,

Hilltop will spend \$24,000 to lease the software the system requires.

Bahe said the biggest challenge has been the time it takes to learn the new system.

“It’s like going from the dashboard of an automobile to a 747,” he said.

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“We’re excited,” Bahe said. “It offers us better methods of analyzing the care we’re giving and we’re going to get a lot more input from direct-care staff like certified nursing assistants and dietary aides.”

Gothenburg Memorial Hospital is beginning to implement a \$1.4 million electronic health records system that will be funded largely with federal stimulus funds and a rural economic development loan and grant.

Hospital officials hope the transition, which is required if health facilities want federal dollars to fund it, is completed by April of 2014.

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