

Making the Switch from Paper to Electronic Charting

By Edward Mason
*Facility - Infrastructure Manager
Mercury Pharmacy Services*



Long Term Care Facility Administrators are heavily tasked with the care of our elderly citizens. If asked what their major focuses are in regards to the operation of their facility, a healthy list would be generated. Improving efficiency without affecting patient care would be at the top of any Administrator's list. Administrators that are actively engaged in their facility will spend countless hours researching ways to improve efficiencies. Scanning the internet can produce a vast collection

of software packages promising to implement efficiencies. One of these packages involves electronic charting.

Dozens of companies have developed electronic charting packages that can indeed improve processes. However the greatest challenge for facilities is not selecting the perfect package, it is managing the change it creates within the facility. Most electronic charting packages are fairly simple to learn, with hands on training and time, caregivers will be charting like a pro in no time. So how do you manage the change? Strong partnerships between the Software Company, the Pharmacy and the Facility must be developed.

The Software Company must be focused on support not only during the implementation but well after this stage is complete. After the sales pitch, the training effort, the implementation process this company must be available to the facility resolving any issues that may and will arise.

Hopefully the Facility has already built a strong partnership with their Dispensing Pharmacy. This partnership is a key element in the success of the implementation. The Facility is now interfaced with their Pharmacy and the resident data is a real time link between the Facility and the Pharmacy. The Pharmacy must be willing to appoint a contact person to manage this data. The contact person needs to be well versed in not only the charting program but the pharmacy system and the interface between the two systems. Most pharmacies have developed relationships with several companies that offer electronic charting. Use your pharmacies knowledge and experience to assist in selecting which charting package to utilize.

Last but definitely not least is the Facility's Management Staff. Without total buy in from the Management Staff any change being implemented is doomed to fail. Caregivers must see that the Facility Managers are presenting a solid front and assigning valuable

resources, materials and time to ensure the success of this project. Each Facility should appoint a Super User that can identify and resolve issues as well as train new staff. The Super User must develop a strong partnership with the Software Company and the Pharmacy Contact Person.

A customer focused Software Company, an involved, knowledgeable Pharmacy and a united Management Team must

form a strong partnership and are the keys to the success of switching from paper to electronic charting.

Edward Mason has been in the Long Term Care Pharmacy Industry for over 15 years. His career in LTC Pharmacy started at Medication Technology Systems where he was Product Manager / Implementation & Training Specialist for Robotic Packaging Systems. Having implemented several different electronic charting

systems over the last 7 years, Ed has become fluent in assisting Long Term Care Communities during the switch from paper to electronic charting. He has recently joined the Mercury Pharmacy Services team in Mountlake Terrace, WA as the Facility – Infrastructure Manager. His primary focus is implementing electronic charting systems into the current customer base of Long Term Care Communities. He can be reached at EdwardM@Mercuryrx.com

Reprinted with permission from the Washington Healthcare News. To learn more about the Washington Healthcare News visit wahcnews.com.