

CASE STUDY: Meducation® Allscripts - Improving Patient Satisfaction with Simplified Medication Instructions Health First

Health First Addresses Patient Satisfaction with Revamped Medication Communications

The gap between knowing and doing is often a difficult one to traverse. Health First leaders certainly experienced this as they addressed patient satisfaction related to medication communications. While they knew what could make medication communications more effective, implementing a successful medication counseling program required overcoming quite a few challenges. Here's how it all played out:

A few years ago, Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) scores at Cape Canaveral Hospital, one of the Florida-based not-for profit healthcare system's four facilities, were hovering somewhere in the 30th percentile range. One of the elements upon which HCAHPS scores are computed is "communication about medicines."

Bottom Line

- Health First set out to improve their HCAHPS scores relating to medication communication as it was apparent that many patients were not getting what they needed from current patient medication education materials
- Health First needed to find an alternative that could offer substantial improvements and implemented FDB's Meducation® in their Allscripts Sunrise™ EHR
- This implementation, across all four Health First hospitals, was the first complete integration of Meducation with Allscripts Sunrise, enabling Health First clinicians to access Meducation's simplified patient medication instructions from within their clinical workflow.
- Since implementing Meducation at Cape Canaveral, HCAHPS scores increased from the 27th percentile to the 76th percentile over the course of two years. Cape Canaveral Hospital reached a high point of 92nd percentile for "Communication About Medications" at the end of year one of the program.

So, health system leaders *knew* they had to address such communication to improve patient satisfaction. Fortunately, they also *knew* what to do, as they had plenty of ideas related to improving the process.

To improve medication communication, they could:

Dedicate a staff member to the coordination of the patient discharge process. "To ensure the appropriateness of the discharge medications requires careful review. But that entire process can be very rapid. So, there is a real need for a dedicated resource to help coordinate medication reconciliation upon discharge," said Mike Sanchez, Pharmacy Residency Coordinator at Holmes Regional Medical Center. "When targeting heart failure patients, for example, that extra person is really needed to help maneuver through the transition of care, detect potential medication errors and help patients better understand their new regimens."

Keep patient education on schedule. "The big issue is timing. To get a clinician in front of the patient, immediately prior to discharge is a real challenge. So, when the discharge medication reconciliation is completed by the physician, that's the one moment that there's an update of the entire medication list for the patient. So, it is valuable for the clinician to get to the patient right after that discharge reconciliation takes place," said Ron McGrier, Director of Pharmaceutical Services, Health First Health Plans, and the former Manager of Pharmacy at Cape Canaveral Hospital.

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RON MCGRIER Director of Pharmaceutical Services

Ensure medication review takes place with each and every patient. “Many hospitals might focus on a certain disease state or a certain level of acuity, perhaps just provide medication education to heart failure or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) patients. We realized that to truly have an impact, though, we needed to address medication education with all of our patients,” McGrier said.

Provide patients with engaging and intuitive education materials. Cape Canaveral is in a coastal community and serves a large elderly and multi-cultural population. “Being located in a port city, we need to be flexible and provide medication instructions in a wide variety of languages,” Sanchez said. As a result, it is imperative that “medication instructions are provided in a format that an elderly person can read,” McGrier said.

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From knowing to doing

While it was relatively easy for Health First leaders to identify what needed to be done to improve medication communication – and subsequently patient satisfaction – leaders had to figure out a way to make it all happen. *Doing it* was a challenge that required continual fine-tuning.

At Cape Canaveral, where the medication education program was initially piloted before being rolled out across the entire system, it was decided that pharmacists would deliver medication counseling to patients after physicians had completed medication reconciliation and before patient discharge – a short, but highly effective window of time to deliver such vital information.

To accomplish this, however, leaders needed to “assign a pharmacist to be on the floors with patients. We found that we had to assign pharmacists to one area, so they could just be part of the workflow and just go with the flow throughout the day and stop in and see patients just prior to their discharge,” McGrier said.

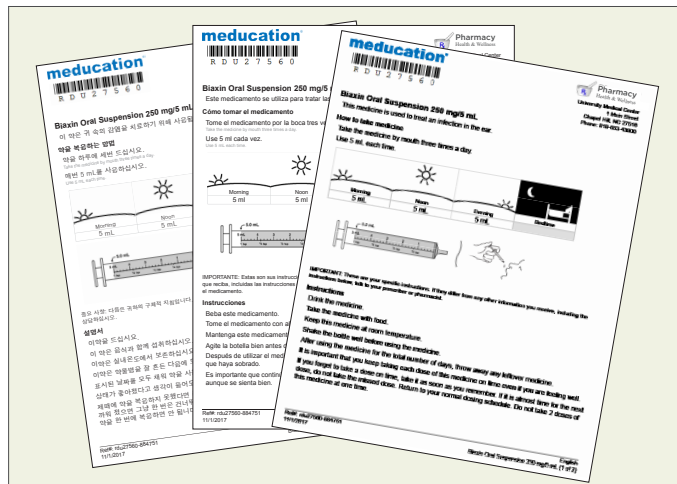
In addition, while it was clear that the medication counseling session needs to take place after the physicians complete the discharge medication reconciliation and before the patient is released, executing on this schedule was challenging. As such, pharmacists discovered they needed to work closely with case managers to better pinpoint exactly when discharges are taking place as well as coordinate with floor nurses to ensure the medication counseling sessions occur at the right time.

What’s more, because it was apparent that many patients were not getting what they needed from current patient medication education materials, leaders needed to find an alternative that could offer substantial improvements.

Meducation® – Simplified Medication Instructions

After reviewing several options, Health First chose FDB’s Meducation: simplified patient medication instructions that enable healthcare providers to create fully-personalized, easy-to-understand medication instructions and regimen summaries.

With Meducation, medication calendars and instructions are provided in more than 20 languages and in formats that make understanding medications intuitive and simple. Documents are written in a 5th- to 8th-grade reading level, and incorporate pictograms, large font sizes and instructional videos for proper administration techniques.



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Integrated Within Allscripts’ Clinical Workflow

Health First also recognized that it was important for their users to access Meducation from within the clinical workflow, minimizing additional workflow steps and time requirements. From a patient safety perspective, it was also important that Meducation instructions be directly driven by the medication instructions in the patient’s electronic health record.

To achieve these objectives, Health First integrated Meducation within its Allscripts Sunrise™ electronic health record. As such, the EHR has become the “source of truth.”

This implementation, across all four Health First hospitals, was the first complete integration of Meducation with Allscripts Sunrise, enabling clinicians to access Meducation’s simplified patient medication instructions from within their clinical workflow.

“With the systems integrated, there is an actual tab in the Allscripts Sunrise Pharmacy manager that pharmacists can click to generate Meducation instructions that include all of the specific medications for individual patients. This makes it possible for the pharmacists to print out the Meducation calendar and instructions and review them with each patient without interrupting their normal workflow.

Once Meducation was integrated within Allscripts, it became something that was used each time a patient was discharged,” McGrier said. “The patients then are able to take this very readable personalized medication calendar and instructions home with them after they are discharged.”

Expanded Role for Pharmacists

After fine-tuning the medication education process, pharmacists have successfully taken on a new patient education role.

“Before, pharmacists were relied upon simply to supply drug information to clinicians but now they’re a source of education for patients,” McGrier said.

And, it’s sitting well with patients, too.

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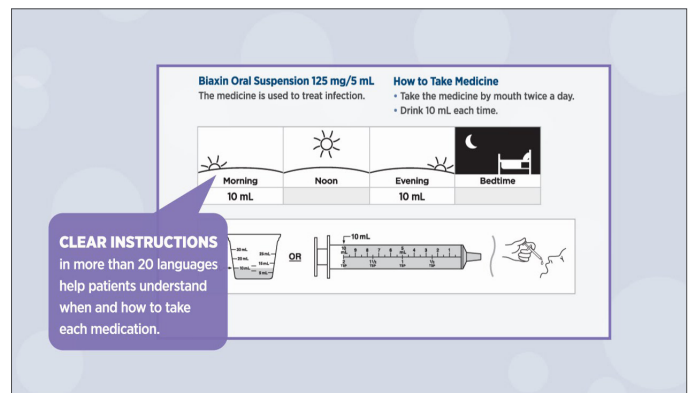
In fact, the “Meducation Across the Nation” team that worked on this initiative won an internal First Health customer service award for this achievement in 2016.

Indeed, by taking on this new role, pharmacists have become integral members of the patient care team. As such, “nurses and physicians are starting to appreciate the value that they bring to the patient care process,” Sanchez said.

“It has been a big eye-opener for the nurses and physicians because they now recognize pharmacists as education providers, who can really talk with patients to ensure they understand their medications as well as being a source for drug information to make decisions at discharge about various adjustments,” McGrier said.

Creating Meaningful Patient Interactions

With Meducation in place, pharmacists now are engaging in meaningful medication education sessions with patients. **“Because we have materials that are easy to read and include a drug calendar on the handout, instead of an entire wall of text, it’s much easier for the pharmacists to explain medication regimens step-by-step.”**



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“And, the instructions don’t just go over the discharge medications. They include all of the home meds, so it’s possible for pharmacists to provide comprehensive medication education to patients – and for patients to show they understand the key points of their medication regimens,” Sanchez said.

Added Bonus: Improving Medication Reconciliation and Preventing Med Errors

In addition, with pharmacists involved, there is “an extra eye on the medication reconciliation process which helps to improve care quality.”

“When conducting medication education, I was able to identify and correct medication errors in about 50% of my interventions.

This is possible because, as a pharmacist, I am reviewing everything, assessing appropriateness, patient adherence and the patient’s understanding of their medications. So, that provides plenty of opportunity to identify and prevent errors,” Sanchez said.

For example, “one time when I was working with a patient who was on blood thinners, I noticed that there was not a follow-up INR (international normalized ratio) appointment scheduled for this patient who was at elevated risk for having a clot. So, I was able to talk with the patient’s wife and she was able to schedule the appointment with the primary care doctor right there on the spot,” Sanchez said.

Such interventions obviously help patients stick their medication regimens – and ultimately benefit from an improved care experience.

“Patients are getting to spend a lot of time with somebody that can answer their questions about their medications. It is far more time than a doctor could commit to patient education. And, it is more time than the nurse could commit because nurses have quite a few patients assigned to them in the hospital. Overall this is very well received by our patients and having a positive impact on our patient satisfaction survey results,” McGrier concluded.

Health First

Health First was formed in August 1995 when Holmes Regional Medical Center, Cape Canaveral Hospital and Palm Bay Hospital joined together in August 1995 to create a truly integrated not-for-profit healthcare delivery system, fulfilling a common mission of improving the health of our community. The first new services added to the Health First network were Health First Medical Group, opening in late 1995, and Health First Health Plans, opening in January 1996. Since then Holmes Regional Trauma Center; VitalWatch, serving as Central Florida’s only electronic Intensive Care Unit; Viera Hospital; and many other services have also been added.

**For more information, contact Sales today at 800.633.3453
or visit fdbhealth.com/meducation**

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