



Paperless Handover: An Effective Measure Worth Taking

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Abstract

Introduction: Effective handover is an essential tool for a safe transfer of patient care from one team to another (1, 2). However, handover is still internationally recognised as a high-risk area for medical errors, and it remains a patient safety priority for the World Health Organisation (2, 3). The Trauma and Orthopaedic department at Morriston Hospital have relied on using a paper-based system for weekend handover. This form of handover was associated with a high number of clinical incidences and complaints.

Method: All weekend handover sheets for September 2022 were audited against the minimum standards of the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCSE) for Safe Handover. There were also electronic surveys that explored the junior doctors' perspectives of the weekend handover system and a proposed new electronic intervention.

Results: An overall poor compliance rate with RCSE guidelines was detected (0% for orthopaedic team, 70% for orthogeriatric team, and 90% for the spinal team). Surveys showed that 100% junior doctors did not find the handwritten handover a safe tool and unsurprisingly 100% of them were in favour of an electronic system. A Quality Improvement Programme using a locally available electronic system was introduced in October 2022 and resulted in a reduction of critical incidence reports from four in September 2022 to zero in October 2022.

Conclusion: Using a paperless handover that utilises the available electronic local health system is a cost-effective and efficient way of providing a safe handover. Sustainability over time and integration with new technologies needs to be tested.

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