

MDS Alert

Patient Satisfaction: Care For People, Not Paper Or Processes

Free up your facility's most precious clinical commodity: time for patients.

The best recipe in the world isn't worth its weight in salt if the cook doesn't have enough time in the kitchen to make it properly.

The same is true for nurses who spend hours in QA and care plan committees to come up with the perfect care plans - but never have enough time at the bedside to implement them.

"Caring for the patients/residents is what leads to better care," emphasizes **Sheryle Thomas, RNC**, at **Superior Woods Health Care Center** in Ypsilanti, MI. Spending time with patients/residents is how you identify clinical and quality of life issues in real time when you can best intervene, she maintains.

"Patients are happiest when they are communicating with the staff and getting their needs met - they are not happier when the nurses are at the nursing station writing notes in 16 charts," Thomas says.

That all sounds good, but with the government-required documentation and QA processes, how can nurses get back to the bedside?

"Find a way not to get lost in the paper process," advises Superior Woods' DON **Julie Grunawalt**, a nurse practitioner who has worked in both acute and long-term care settings.

Idea: Nurse practitioners and physicians often record their notes for transcription, which frees up their time, Grunawalt says. In the nursing home setting, voice-recognition systems, as well as personal digital assistants (PDAs) and other computerized documentation systems, can serve that same purpose.

To expedite ADL assessment and documentation, Superior Woods recently implemented a CareTracker (Resource Systems), which allows nurses and aides to key residents' functional status, vital signs, intake and output, etc. For now, aides are using the system to key in ADLs, which has really improved their accuracy, says McGee.

Time-saving tip: Electronic medical records can focus the facility's teaching and peer review "because you can tell exactly who signed on and entered flow-sheet type data, such as ADLs or vital signs," observes **Lisa Conrad, RN**, director of nursing at **Broadview MultiCare Center Rosepoint Pavilion** in Parma, OH.

By following the electronic trail, the facility can target its training to the small minority of caregivers who need extra attention. That saves time with training - and also improves the effectiveness of your training effort, says Conrad. "The EMRs also make it easy to monitor compliance with documentation and assessment requirements," she adds.