

Digital Care Boards Improve Patient Safety, Expand Access to Providers

About St. James Parish Hospital



St. James Parish Hospital is a critical access hospital

serving Litcher, Louisiana, since 1955. Located in a rural community of 22,000 residents, the hospital's patients are largely underserved, older, sicker and lower income. Committed to providing quality and compassionate care, St. James Parish Hospital has evolved throughout the years, adapting to the ever-changing needs of its community. One part of that evolution is embracing and implementing technology to improve patient safety.

Digital Care Boards Enhance Patient Care Connections

To upgrade the hospital's technology and improve patient safety, St. James Parish Hospital replaced its nurse call system with computerized whiteboards. The digital care boards maintain the patient's care plan in a dynamic format, automatically updating in the patient's room as nurses modify their care. The boards have video capabilities to enhance care for patients, improve access to providers through telehealth and engage family members.

St. James Parish Hospital had two main goals when implementing the digital care boards:

- ▶ **Enhance communication and patient experience:** This system empowers patients and family members with information about their health status, care plan and discharge instructions. With video capabilities, the digital care boards enable family members who may not be able to visit their loved ones at the hospital to participate in virtual visits, stay engaged in the patient's care and join discussions with

physicians and nurses. The technology enhances communication among providers, giving them up-to-date, dynamic information on the patient's care status every time the provider walks into the room.

- ▶ **Reduce falls:** The digital care boards enable providers to monitor high fall risk patients more closely by having visual observation. When providers can keep a closer eye on patients, it reduces the number of falls and improves overall patient safety.

Program Results

After implementing the new digital care boards, St. James Parish Hospital saw multiple positive outcomes. The hospital's scores on a federal government survey that measures patients' perspectives of their hospital care dramatically improved. Nursing communication saw an increase from 79% favorable to 93% favorable, which is above state and national averages. Similar increases were seen with patient and family understanding of discharge instructions.

The digital care boards also significantly reduced the number of patient falls. Before implementation, roughly six patients would fall at St. James Parish Hospital each year. Now with increased surveillance of patients, that number has dropped to two — a 67% reduction.

Lastly, the digital care boards have enabled St. James Parish Hospital to more than double its telehealth capabilities. Prior to implementing this technology, the hospital was scheduling about 14 telemedicine consultations a year — now they can schedule as many as 40 each year. This is particularly important in a rural community like Litcher, where access to specialty physicians is limited.