



Increasing Patient Satisfaction and Care with *Custom Whiteboards*

How Effective Whiteboard Communication Mitigates the Dangers and Costs of Patient Anxiety

Patient anxiety can manifest itself in nearly any stage of treatment (before treatment, during treatment and post care). While hospitals have learned to treat patients in spite of their anxiety, the effect it has on patients, care teams and hospital performance is driving up costs, reducing overall patient health and prolonging treatment.

One proven solution to these issues has been implementing and using patient room whiteboards. When used effectively as a communication tool, whiteboards can reduce patient anxiety, increase satisfaction scores and reimbursements and help nurses provide better care for their patients.

Reducing Anxiety Before Treatment

Anxiety manifests itself in patients before they even make the decision to seek treatment, often causing hesitance that can result in serious health consequences.¹ Delaying treatment can initially increase the cost of treatment and reduce its effectiveness, in turn decreasing patient satisfaction and recovery rates.

This decrease in patient satisfaction can have a profound effect on HCAHPS scores, which often dictate reimbursement rates for hospitals. In order to mitigate the effects of anxiety before treatment and increase patient satisfaction, providers can take the time to effectively communicate with patients — explaining the details and reasoning behind tests and procedures — using whiteboards. This helps prepare patients for treatment and reduce the unknown factors that cause anxiety, thus increasing how satisfied they feel about their care. Studies have shown significant increases of up 6.3 points in patient satisfaction when whiteboards were used in hospital settings.²

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Reducing Anxiety During Treatment

During treatment, patient anxiety can manifest itself through pain, nausea, fatigue and depression.³ It can also delay the healing process, stymie communication efforts and make patients harder to treat. Anxious patients require more attention and care, a demand that pulls nurses away from treating other patients. It can also occupy substantial portions of nurses' time and increase their stress levels.⁴

As with pre-treatment anxiety, the anxiety patients feel during treatment can be alleviated through effective communication using whiteboards. Custom whiteboards with predefined fields allow nurses to keep patients up to date on medication schedules, upcoming tests and procedures, visiting hours, meal times and much more. Understanding this information increases the familiarity and confidence patients have in their treatment plan, ultimately reducing anxiety.

Providing quality information to patients results in many positive effects during treatment:

- + An increase in patient satisfaction relating to treatment.⁵
- + A decrease in pain-related anxiety.⁵
- + When patients are more satisfied and confident in their care, their 30-day risk-standardized readmission rates decrease.⁶

Reducing Anxiety After Treatment

It's during post treatment and recovery where patient anxiety has an especially harsh impact on hospital costs. Preoperative anxiety contributes to an increase in postoperative readmissions, more than doubling the risk for patients.³ Along with the costs of additional treatment, increased readmissions are directly tied to decreases in medicare reimbursements. Starting in October of 2016, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has begun penalizing 2,600 hospitals across the country, a practice that experts have estimated will cost these hospitals more than \$500 million in reimbursements over the next year.⁴



6.3 points

The increase in patient satisfaction when whiteboards were used in hospital settings.

1. Logo - Not only for facility branding, but also to ensure the patient knows where they are.

2. Current Date - Awareness of the date reduces anxiety.

3. Care Team - Easily accessible and visible so patient and family get to know the care team and know how to contact them.

4. Daily Goals & Discharge Info - Seeing daily activity and discharge information creates focus and reduces anxiety.

5. Pain Management - Families and staff can quickly know how the patient is feeling without interrogation.

These potential losses have caused hospitals to review the causes of hospital readmissions, which are most commonly tied to patients being discharged without knowing:

- + Who to contact with questions regarding their care.⁷
- + What the goals of their care were and if they were met.⁷
- + When they are due for a follow-up appointment.⁷

When patients are discharged without the proper information on their post care goals and next steps, anxiety can set in, especially if they are recovering from a stay in the intensive care unit (ICU) or from a serious illness. Anxiety disorder has been shown to occur in 12% to 43% of former ICU patients, and levels of depression range from 10% to 30%.⁸







Combine post-treatment anxiety with a lack of provider communication with patients, which has been shown to be the cause of 25% of readmissions,⁷ and the need for effective communication tools like whiteboards becomes clear. If hospitals can identify the information that their patients want to know, they can effectively use whiteboards to relay that information and alleviate the anxiety and uncertainty patients feel through all stages of treatment.

25%

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The Right Information on Hospital Whiteboards Can Reduce Anxiety in All Stages of Treatment

The right content on your custom whiteboard will keep patients informed and engaged during treatment, decreasing their level of anxiety and making them more satisfied with their care. Some of the many predefined information areas you can have on your board include:

-  **Care Team Information:** When patients understand and know who their doctor, nurse and other care team members are, they are less likely to be anxious during their stay.
-  **Daily Goals:** Keeps patients focused on getting better. Giving them an obtainable goal will boost their morale and keep them engaged in their treatment.
-  **Discharge Dates/Goals:** Keeps patient in the loop regarding when they can be discharged and what they need to do to reach that goal.
-  **Medication Information:** Medications are unknown to patients. Including medication names, reason for administration and side effects helps ease anxiety by letting them know what to expect.
-  **Visiting Hours:** Allows patients to coordinate with family and friends to arrange visits and keep them at ease.
-  **Meal Information and Times:** This is one of the most frequent requests from patients. Letting patients know when their next meal will be served means they won't have to stop busy nurses to ask them.

For more than 15 years, VividBoard has been leading the way in high quality custom whiteboards that help care providers effectively communicate with their patients. Our whiteboards are easy to read and clean and make communicating with patients simple. Contact our team to learn more about how our custom whiteboards can be an effective solution for your organization.

Sources:

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