Lakeland HealthCare, Saint Joseph

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Lakeland HealthCare transitioned to Epic as our electronic medical record (EMR) system nearly two years ago. Like many institutions, we realized greater efficiency in the provision of care and reductions in adverse events and safety events. One area that the pharmacy department has recently addressed is the communication and documentation of pharmacy notes to the medical staff.

Pharmacists at Lakeland have a long history of providing consultative pharmacy services for dosing and monitoring of therapies, including antibiotics and anticoagulants, a pharmacokinetic service and accountability for identified components of core measures. Historically, any documentation related to these activities was charted electronically in an inconsistent manner and internal notes were maintained on paper and passed from pharmacist to pharmacist. We recognized this as a gap in our services.

A team of our pharmacy staff, led by Pat Dudding, R.Ph., set out to improve this process. Leveraging our Epic EMR and using smart texts and phrases, the team developed a consistent and standardized progress note format in Epic. The progress note template has been developed to automatically pull in pertinent information (i.e., lab values, problem lists) from the patient’s medical record and succinctly display it in our progress notes. It also allows the pharmacist to modify the note so as to add more or less information, as the situation dictates. This has increased the efficiency and completeness of the pharmacists in documenting the interventions and improved the level of communication our team has had with the medical and nursing staff. Additionally, we have limited the paper notes we have been using in the department to communicate information between shifts, which has been an improvement to our practices. Feedback from all involved parties has been positive and this change has allowed our pharmacists to more effectively impact the care of our patients.