

How Hospital Writing Surfaces Enhance Communication in Healthcare

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Fifty — the number of employees you’re likely to encounter over a four-day hospital stay, according to the handbook [“Patient Safety and Quality: An Evidence-Based Handbook for Nurses.”](#) This constant interaction means continuous information and communication. Effective teamwork is essential among hospital staff and all treatment team members, including patients and their caregivers. With a range of dynamic relationships, each with their unique set of communication needs, collaboration in healthcare settings must be easy, clear and flexible.

In healthcare, key information changes at a rapid pace. To keep track of it all, many designers have integrated whiteboards into healthcare design to help with retention rates. The brain works differently based on the way we receive information. We retain 20 percent of what we hear, 30 percent of what we see, 50 percent of what we see and hear and a massive *70 percent of what we say and write*. This significant increase in retention is crucial in decreasing medical errors.

The Critical Role of Collaboration

Researchers from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland found that improved teamwork and communication are described by healthcare workers as among the most important factors in improving clinical effectiveness and job satisfaction. When teamwork and communication aren't efficient, everyone suffers.

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations cites communication failures as the leading cause for medication errors, delays in treatment and wrong-site surgeries, as well as the second most frequently cited root cause for operative and postoperative events and fatal falls. Considering that between 44,000 and 98,000 people die every year in the U.S. due to medical errors, according to the 1999 Institute of Medicine report, [*To Err Is Human: Building a Safer Health System*](#), collaborative products in healthcare settings help prevent devastating mistakes.

Karri Mupo, a registered nurse in the cardiac ICU/CCU at Northeast Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville, GA describes how collaborative products like [*hospital whiteboards*](#) make her workplace safer. "In order to improve the safety of patients, my hospital has implemented safety huddles to start each shift. Safety huddles are daily meetings where staff members can announce any concerns or recognitions prior to starting their shift. Whiteboards are utilized to help visualize and communicate many elements to improve patient care, such as current staff ratio, medication

and supplies issues along with other safety tools. Effective communication helps to create a safe environment to improve patient care.”



Organization is Imperative

Clear communication requires organization. Evidence from [Harvard Medical School](#) shows that more than one-fifth of patients hospitalized in the United States reported hospital-system problems in 2003, including staff providing conflicting information and staff not knowing which physician is in charge of their care. Additional research conducted by the [Department of Defense and Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#) during the 10-year period of 1995-2005 demonstrates that ineffective team communication is the root cause for nearly 66 percent of all medical errors during that period. The environment of the healthcare industry is undergoing an evolution, and the effective distribution of information in operating rooms, patient rooms, and nurses work stations will continue to be a vital component of exceptional patient care.

Jennifer Thomas-Roloff, CAPP and practice administrator at Gwinnett Pulmonary Group says organization is imperative. “In the practice of medicine, it is imperative to stay organized. With an active patient population of over 60,000, physicians rely on multiple tools to keep the information secure and accessible. The practice of medicine is a collaborative effort. The use of whiteboards to map out a patient’s treatment plan and clearly explain the patient’s condition results in quality patient care.”

Collaborative Products for Healthcare Environments



With high stakes and constant communication, collaborative products are essential for effective teamwork and patient wellbeing in healthcare environments. State-of-the-art printing processes allow for [customized writing surfaces](#) with healthcare facilities' logo and branding, schedules or patient care information. PolyVision is a leader in creating highly durable CeramicSteel products for architecture and collaboration. CeramicSteel is a smooth, glass-like surface that is built to last. The non-porous surface is resistant to bacteria, making it suitable for the strict requirements of healthcare environments.

Joanne Rarangol is an imaging specialist at Designtex, an applied materials company, and partners with PolyVision often on projects. She notes that PolyVision's a³ CeramicSteel panels, "have the elements highly requested for many projects especially within healthcare: durability, cleanability, bacteria-resistant properties, fire-resistance, scratch-resistance, graffiti-resistance and our clients have a positive reaction."