



Healthcare IT News

Hospital executives report poor patient flow, cite healthcare IT as solution

By [Diana Manos, Senior Editor](#) | 10/09/08 |

According to a new survey, 89 percent of hospital executives are reporting poor patient flow at their facilities, and are concerned about how to improve productivity to meet patient demand in the future.

The survey also found most respondents think healthcare IT is the best way to improve patient flow.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Advertisement

More than 200 healthcare executives were surveyed by [StatCom](#), and said hospital-wide patient flow systems have the best potential to improve patient throughput, followed by ED trackers, bed trackers and departmental solutions. Expanding facilities and manual processes ranked last.

Conversely, 56 percent of the healthcare executives surveyed said they do not have a patient flow system, and 94 percent said they are incorporating manual process improvements to improve patient flow.

According to the survey, 88 percent of healthcare executives said improved productivity and efficiency at their facility is essential to meet patient demand, with 67 percent planning to invest in patient-tracking technology. Forty-three percent said they will expand their facilities, 35 percent said they will hire more nursing staff and 3 percent said they plan to hire more administrative staff.

To help track patient status, respondents said they are considering bar-coding (62 percent), patient tracking software (38 percent), tablets or PDAs (33 percent), radio frequency identification (29 percent), inpatient scheduling modules (23 percent) and other technologies (12 percent), the survey said.

Healthcare executives named a number of reasons for poor patient flow, including:

- Poor communication (67 percent);
- Ineffective scheduling of activities and resources (36 percent);
- Lack of beds (36 percent);
- Lack of staff to help facilitate patient flow (34 percent);
- And poor centralized knowledge about the location and status of each patient (32 percent).

"The majority of healthcare executives recognize the issues their facility faces when it comes to poor patient flow," said [Michael Holland](#), executive vice president of sales and marketing at StatCom, a subsidiary of [Jackson Healthcare Solutions](#). "This study validates the challenges hospitals face when dealing with patient flow, along with technology uses, capacity issues and how healthcare facilities are taking on those challenges directly."

The responsibility of optimizing patient flow resides largely on chief nursing officers, according to 32 percent of respondents, followed by the chief operating officer (15 percent), vice president of nursing (13 percent), chief executive officer (11 percent) and vice president of operations (four percent).

Hospitals reported nearly an even split on use of healthcare IT for bed management. The majority (70 percent) of respondents reported patient tracking and bed management information is made available to nursing staff via computer terminals, up from 63 percent in last year's survey. Respondents in 2008 also said their facility has patient tracking and bed management information available via phone calls and voice messages (67 percent), grease boards (29 percent), digital displays (19 percent) and registered mobile devices (12 percent).

[Sheri Sorrell](#), research manager for Jackson Healthcare, said hospitals fall short in providing tracking information to patients' loved ones. "When it comes to displaying care milestone progression or waiting times, one in 10 facilities currently display this information to patients and their families," she said. "Patient tracking should be a main focus, so loved ones are constantly informed and hospitals are more accountable."