

## Survey says hospitals could improve patient tracking

By [Diana Manos, Senior Editor](#)

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ATLANTA - Hospitals could do a better job of tracking patients, according to a new study released Monday by StatCom.

Fifty-eight percent of the healthcare executives surveyed for StatCom's 2007 National Survey of Patient Throughput and Capacity Challenges reported that their facilities do not have the ability to track patient flow continuously.

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Additionally, 53 percent of the executives surveyed rated their hospital's efficiency at the bed-turn process as poor or fair, the study found.

The study also discovered that 67 percent of executives polled report phone calls and voice messages are still the most common way of tracking patients.

"This research clearly shows that the [U.S.](#) healthcare system, although implementing some departmental patient tracking systems, has not yet fully embraced the enterprise-wide logistics technology needed to provide up-to-the-minute patient flow insight," said [Eric Morgan](#), president and CEO of StatCom.

"Efficient management of supply and demand along with accurate patient flow visibility can transform operational performance."

The vast majority of those surveyed said they have incorporated process improvements. However, half said they have not yet incorporated a patient flow tracking system, though most of them ranked patient flow systems as having the greatest potential to improve patient throughput.

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Sixty-three percent indicated that they have some form of patient flow information available electronically.

According to [Francois Sainfort, Ph. D.](#), director of [Health Systems Institute](#) at [Georgia Tech](#), implementing patient flow technology is critical. "Simply put, patient flow logistics helps reduce bottlenecks and improves patient throughput and capacity management across the hospital," Sainfort said. "This in turn decreases wait times, increases patient satisfaction and makes for a higher performing healthcare system."

The study defined found the most common bottlenecks in moving patients included:

- Delayed decisionmaking (45 percent)
- Lack of preparedness for discharge (41 percent)
- Mismatch between critical care beds and regular beds (40 percent)
- Consistent limited bed availability (38 percent)
- Increased length-of-stay beyond that authorized (36 percent)

The survey was conducted online in October with 225 [U.S.](#) healthcare executives.