

THE ROLE OF ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS IN STRUCTURING NURSING HANDOFF COMMUNICATION AND MAINTAINING SITUATION AWARENESS

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ABSTRACT

In healthcare institutions, work must continue 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A team of nurses is needed to provide around-the-clock patient care, and this process requires transfer of patient care responsibilities, a process known as a “handoff.” The present study explored the role of electronic health records (EHRs) in structuring handoff communication and maintaining situation awareness among nurses during handoff.

Several theoretical frameworks and models were used to guide this study, which aims to assess the nurses’ satisfaction with the EHRs during handoff, to explore the contents and the context of handoff, and identify the artifacts the nurses use to in order to ensure the continuity of care and the delivery of quality handoff reports. A mixed-method approach was used to study the role of the EHRs, Al-Shifa, in structuring handoff communication and to explore handoff practices in Oman.

The findings of this study demonstrated that the nurses had positive perceptions about the usefulness and ease of use of EHRs for structuring handoff communication and promoting effective and efficient transition of patient care during handoff. The study also revealed that nurses use a variety of artifacts to document, communicate, and coordinate patients’ care reasonability during handoff. The use of electronic health records during handoff was reported to increase the accessibility to patients’ medical records and ensure both the continuity of care and the delivery of quality handoff reports.