Wooster Community Hospital Health System Frees Up Nurses' Charting Time by Almost 1,600 Hours Annually in Expanse

SNAPSHOT

Opportunity

Personalize EHR workflows based on nurses' engagement in software governance.

Solution

Expanse Patient Care, KLAS Arch Collaborative membership

Benefits

- Gave nurses a voice in workflow improvements
- Personalized the Expanse EHR to improve nurses' experience
- Achieved results that indicated an estimated reduction in documentation time by 1,555 hours* and 2.8 million clicks per year

*Results may vary based on changes implemented and resources dedicated to the initiative.

Profile

Located in northeastern Ohio, Wooster Community Hospital Health System is the largest nonprofit healthcare system in Wayne County. It comprises a 173-bed acute care hospital and several clinics offering a full range of inpatient and outpatient services. WCH is independent and locally governed.

Introduction

After implementing MEDITECH's Expanse EHR in 2021, Wooster Community Hospital Health System dedicated time and resources to optimizing its new platform for physicians. Results from a KLAS Arch Collaborative survey given to WCH clinicians in December 2023 indicated that the investment had paid off: Providers gave the Expanse EHR high marks for satisfaction and usability. Next, WCH leaders turned their focus to nurses. The leaders inferred from survey results that nursing engagement in software governance initiatives, which had declined since the pandemic, contributed to documentation and charting challenges.

According to the Arch Collaborative survey responses, nurses felt they were over-documenting during multiple touchpoints throughout the patient experience, and thought there could be opportunities to streamline documentation. Like most hospitals, WCH frequently added new assessment questions and documentation fields for nurses in response to regulatory changes or organizational needs. For example, nurses were required to screen patients for malnutrition and social determinants of health on the transitional care and rehabilitation units, where dietitians and social workers perform similar assessments.

Designing a 'FUN Time'

WCH hadn't revisited whether nurses needed to document all the information they were capturing, which contributed to the challenge of balancing documentation needs and patients' expectations for more meaningful interactions. Chief Information Officer Eric Gasser, RN, and other WCH leaders thought they could revisit original documentation builds to personalize them for their nurses' workflows and improve efficiency. Happy nurses make happy patients, and happy nurses are more focused on their patients than the EHR, noted Gasser.

Within two months of receiving the survey responses, Gasser assembled a multidisciplinary team of clinical analysts, IT staff, and nurse representatives to reengage nurses by soliciting their feedback on nursing workflows. Gasser's team introduced nursing staff to the Free Up Nurses' Time, or FUN Time, initiative in May 2024. The initiative enabled nurses to submit suggestions for nursing workflow improvements, leveraging the Expanse EHR's flexibility to solve documentation and charting challenges.

KLAS Arch Collaborative survey reveals opportunities

The KLAS Arch Collaborative is a provider-led initiative that aims to improve clinicians' EHR experience. WCH and other members collaborate with KLAS on surveys and benchmarking for insights to improve EHR use at their organizations. Survey results help to illustrate what makes a satisfied EHR user, such as adequate training and shared ownership, but they also reveal pain points.

WCH asked for physicians' and nurses' feedback through the KLAS ARCH Collaborative EHR satisfaction survey. Results demonstrated that earlier efforts to optimize physicians' workflows in the EHR had paid off, indicating providers were very satisfied with the EHR. However, nursing scores were not as high as leadership had hoped; the survey revealed that nurses felt their workflows could be more streamlined by eliminating duplicative documentation and unproductive charting accumulated through regulatory requirements and organizational needs.

"The results of the FUN Time initiative have been remarkable — both in terms of operational outcomes and nursing engagement," said Gasser. "We set out to reduce the documentation burden and streamline workflows, and the feedback from our frontline nurses allowed us to exceed every metric we set. This initiative proved how vital it is to involve nurses directly in system design and optimization."

Successful track record with optimization

WCH had already discussed opportunities for optimization and enhancements in Expanse Patient Care as part of the healthcare system's migration to a new update in 2023. The new release included a flexible and dynamic new handoff routine that enables nurses to communicate pertinent patient information in real time as patients transition between shift changes or care levels. To improve nurse efficiency, WCH and MEDITECH collaborated on streamlining the organization's handoff process to optimize the new feature. WCH's IT team and MEDITECH's Expanse Patient Care support team met each week. Ultimately, WCH's IT team streamlined handoff assessments and communication with a new widget and customized handoff template. Director of Nursing Operations and Special Projects Ryan McBeth, RN, described the project's success as the push that got the optimization ball rolling.

"Once you have success with a project like handoff communication, you're amazed and want to do more," he said. "What else can we do differently to help get more time back for nurses? The Arch Collaborative survey data showed opportunities to save nurses even more time."

HANDOFF COMMUNICATION
OPTIMIZATION

Eliminated 29 fields that nurses filled out per admission and 7 per shift change.	**Time Savings:** Estimated **147** hours* per year.	29 fields reduced per admission x 5880 admissions = **170,520 clicks per year** 7 fields reduced per shift change x 52,920 shift changes per year = **370,440 clicks reduced**

WCH's calculations are based on forecasted data, not a time study.

A collaborative strategy

MEDITECH Senior Analysts Jennifer Carrangelo and Alyson Silva worked directly with WCH's IT team and KLAS representatives to review WCH's nursing survey data and provide feedback on common themes such as documentation burden and user personalization. When reviewing the survey data, Gasser's team discovered they had opportunities to reduce clicks and improve nurses' efficiency by adjusting access settings and other simple fixes, resulting in quick wins. Larger projects, such as identifying duplicate queries across assessments, would use rules and query mapping to reduce duplicate documentation.

"Expanse Patient Care offers a new level of personalization for nurses and allied health professionals," explained Carrangelo. "Features like custom widget templates and personalized shortcut buttons can be used to create a more efficient, individualized EHR."

"By providing access to user preferences, nurses can have autonomy over their experience," added Silva.

"We focused on these opportunities throughout WCH's migration to the new update and expanded upon them with the FUN Time initiative. Beyond the update features, the FUN Time findings brought to light access settings that made a huge impact."

Next, Gasser reached out to WCH's bedside nurses. He believed they were in the best possible position to define how to improve their workflow, so he attended frontline staff meetings in various departments to share the survey data. As a registered nurse himself, Gasser knows how challenging it is to meet documentation demands while focusing on patients.

"I asked if they would be interested in improving the user experience, and the nurses responded enthusiastically," said Gasser. "We were looking for influential volunteers to represent all nurses in their department, so we asked directors and department leaders to recommend a nurse representative from each unit to help with the initiative. Enlisting nurse volunteers to help guide the project was essential to its success."

Implementing the optimization initiative

Overwhelmingly positive response

Gasser's team's organization-wide effort sought to engage bedside nurses to offer their feedback on changes that could improve workflow and raise nurses' satisfaction to the level of physicians.

"In May 2024, we committed to addressing this discrepancy by launching the FUN Time initiative in recognition of National Nurses Month," said Gasser. "We dedicated IS resources to focus on meaningful, tangible improvements in nursing documentation by addressing workflow issues and modifying our initial build. As part of the initiative, we would reexamine data fields and documentation requirements to determine if collecting the information was still warranted, and if alternatives were possible."

Nurses' response to the FUN Time initiative was overwhelmingly positive. Enthusiastic about the opportunity to offer their feedback, they submitted 150 recommendations to the FUN Time suggestion log. Unit representatives carefully reviewed the feedback and aggregated the data to confirm that each submission accurately reflected the collective viewpoint of the floor or department. Gasser's team did not want submissions that reflected one or two nurses' opinions.

"The volunteer representatives did a great job encouraging their colleagues to submit suggestions and triaging their appropriateness," said Gasser. "My team then prioritized and grouped submissions into categories."

Gasser's team organized the suggestions into five categories:

- ‣ Field/section not useful
- ‣ Functionality could be improved
- ‣ New workflow needed
- ‣ Redundancy
- ‣ Too many clicks

They also grouped them by the amount of time estimated to resolve the issue:

- ‣ Small (0-2 hours)
- ‣ Medium (2-6 hrs)
- ‣ Large (6-10 hours)
- ‣ Extra-large (10+ hours)

Gasser's team prioritized the suggestions according to their complexity.

'Quick wins' fuel enthusiasm

WCH's IT team was able to address many of the FUN Time initiative suggestions themselves. In several instances, nurses didn't know the IT team had the flexibility to tailor the system to accommodate their requests. These quick wins helped to garner enthusiastic support for the project, as nursing staff saw their concerns being addressed.

MEDITECH's Expanse Patient Care analysts assisted WCH's IT team with staff suggestions that were more complicated or labor-intensive. Analysts met with the team regularly to:

- Recommend utilization reports to determine what's being used or not.
- Suggest access settings to improve care plan workflows.
- Assist with branching documentation and query mapping to reduce documentation.
- Recommend personalization options through preferences, access, and widgets to improve the individual experience.

To keep nurses up to date on their requests, the IT team sent standardized communication every two weeks to inform them of the updates that had been made and changes that were in progress. A bimonthly FUN Time log described the changes, estimated how much time the changes saved for nurses, and determined how many fields and/or clicks were reduced. The IT team also distributed tip sheets that indicated the request, the hospital's response, and instructions, along with screenshots. They created training videos to educate nursing staff on more in-depth workflow changes.

Elevating nurses' user experience

Data from the KLAS Arch Collaborative survey informed WCH's strategies to engage frontline nursing staff and increase efficiency. By improving clinician satisfaction and meeting nurses' needs, Gasser's team increased nurses' Net EHR Experience Score by 20.1%. In addition, the initiative helped to get nursing governance back on board post-pandemic through routine engagement and meetings. Gasser notes that giving nurses a voice has made a significant difference.

"We've already addressed 81 suggestions," he said. "As a result, we've made substantial changes that have saved nearly 2.8 million clicks and reduced charting time by almost 1,600 hours — remarkable results!"

Gasser used 2023 admissions data to calculate the results, estimating nurses' time savings and the number of clicks reduced. He used averages for shift changes, medication reassessments per patient, communication orders per patient, and other statistics, calculating the length of time, number of fields documented, and number of clicks required for each intervention.

TOTAL ESTIMATED
NURSING TIME SAVED

Estimated documentation time saved per year	Fields/choices removed or no longer required to be documented	Estimated clicks reduced per year
1,555.55 hours	96	2,759,805

Gasser conducted a follow-up survey in September 2024 to determine if nurses' Net EHR Experience Score had increased after suggestions had been implemented. The percentage increases were significant across all nursing positions.

PERCENTAGE INCREASE
IN NET EHR EXPERIENCE SCORE BY CLINICAL BACKGROUND

Nursing Assistant .... ↑

Other Clinicians .... ↑

Registered Nurse (RN) .... ↑

+47.7%

+45.3%

+20.1%
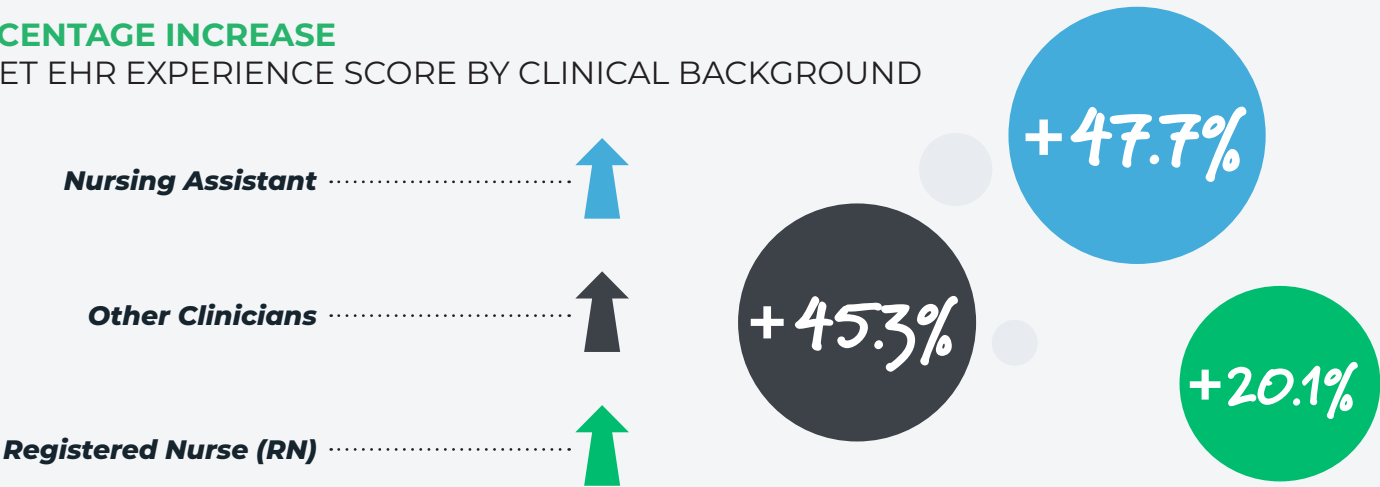
Survey results from December 2023 to September 2024.

NURSES' SUGGESTIONS SUBMITTED TO THE FUN TIME INITIATIVE
LIST OF EXAMPLES AND THEIR IMPACT

Topic	Nurses' Suggestions	Changes Implemented	Estimated Time Reduction per year	Estimated Fields/ Clicks Eliminated per year
Medication reassessments	Reconsider doing a medication reassessment on scheduled pain medications and other scheduled medications.	New rule eliminates required reassessments for scheduled medications.	73.2 hours (52,698* initial scheduled assessments/scheduled reassessments at 5 seconds per assessment = 4,391.5 minutes.) *Statistics measured over one year.	237,906 clicks (27,114* initial scheduled assessments x 5 clicks = 135,570 clicks + 25,584 scheduled reassessments x 4 clicks = 102,336 clicks.) *Statistics measured over one year.
OB labor admissions	Remove documentation on the prenatal classes section to simplify the learning assessment.	Although prenatal class documentation is a regulatory requirement and cannot be removed, the team changed the assessment section to a branching-type documentation, displaying only if prenatal classes were given. Branching optimizes the workflow and reduces wordiness.	10 hours	2 fields/1,200 clicks

Mother/baby duplicative charting	Remove the requirement for nurses to document that they have checked the ID bands of both the mother and the infant in both the mother's and the baby's charts. This is double documentation.	Leadership approved removing 4 fields from the mother's documentation and only documenting the task in the infant's chart.	601 minutes	4 fields/4,808 clicks
Acknowledging orders	Reconsider requiring nurses to click on each order to acknowledge it.	WCH's Nursing Leadership Council approved using the "acknowledge all" button, allowing nurses to acknowledge all orders. While nurses must view and understand all new orders, they are no longer required to click on each order to acknowledge it.	245 hours (2.5 minutes per admission based on 5,880* admissions.)	264,600 clicks (45 clicks per admission based on 5,880* admissions.) *2023 admission data
Communication order enhancement for OB	Reduce the 40 nursing communication orders that require clicking on them to see the actual order behind the communication.	Communication orders have been reduced to 33 specific orders. Only 6 of these specific orders require the nurse to click for additional information, indicated by an ellipsis next to the description.	600 minutes (Average of 6 communication orders at 5 seconds per order based on 1,200 OB patients per year.)	14,400 clicks (7 total orders removed. Reduced opening and closing 7,200 orders.)
Redundant admission questions	Eliminate 9 questions on the admission assessment that inpatient nurses ask and document, even though those questions have already been asked and documented by the ED nurses.	Patients' responses automatically populate admission assessments. Nurses can confirm responses with the patient, but won't be required to ask or document a second time. Questions and estimated clicks saved per admitted patient: 28 clicks.	201 hours (Estimated 2.33 minutes per admission from ED x 5,170* patients.) *2023 admission data	144,760 clicks (28 clicks per inpatient admitted from ED x 5,170* patients.) *2023 admission data
Streamlining of transitional care and rehab unit documentation	Remove social determinants of health and nutrition screenings from nursing admission interventions for the transitional care and rehab units. Instead, social workers and dietitians, who see every patient on these units, will fill out the assessments.	Nursing assessment has been changed from "Admission Ht/Wt/ Nutrition" to "Admission Ht/Wt/Dysphagia." A dietitian assessment, "Dietitian: TCU/RU Admission" and a social worker assessment, "Social Work - Social Determinants of Health Screening/Assessment," have been added.	8.83 hours (Estimated 1 minute of documentation time per patient admission to units x 530* patients.) *2023 admission data	6,360 clicks (12 clicks saved per admission to units x 530* patients.) *2023 admission data

What's next for FUN Time

WCH and MEDITECH enthusiastically support the KLAS Arch Collaborative, which offers standardized surveys and benchmarking that enable member organizations to facilitate learning and simplify measuring EHR satisfaction against similar organizations. WCH's evaluation of the Arch Collaborative survey feedback and data-driven insights guided the multidisciplinary FUN Time team as they aspired to elevate nurses' EHR experience.

"By engaging frontline nursing staff in the documentation and by listening to them, we've significantly impacted their perception of the EHR," said McBeth.

WCH Health System completed the FUN Time initiative in December 2024. Instead of continuing with a similar initiative for National Nurses Month 2025, IT leadership chose to focus on other projects that affect nursing satisfaction, including addressing performance issues with internal wireless phones and investing in their virtual desktop infrastructure to improve performance.

"We're leaving the door open for future FUN Time initiatives, but we'll continue to use National Nurses Month as a catalyst for other nursing projects that will help us to attract and retain nurses," said Gasser. "WCH is committed to continually improving the experience for our nursing team. We want to provide the best possible work environment for these essential clinicians."

Gasser noted that transitioning to Expanse and collaborating with MEDITECH and KLAS were major steps forward in optimizing nurses' workflows. Personalization and other workflow improvements have reduced the burden on WCH nurses and enhanced their day-to-day experience.

"As an independent healthcare system, maintaining our autonomy is incredibly important, and having full control over our EHR is a key part of that," said Gasser. "The flexibility of MEDITECH Expanse allows us to make meaningful changes that align with our goals, support our clinical teams, and improve overall usability."