

Birthing a New EMR

Launching an Electronic Medical Record (EMR) software project is an exhilarating and daunting task. Months, and in some cases years, are invested in interviewing software companies and reviewing products to identify the most suitable offering to streamline and enhance the process of maintaining and presenting patient medical records. In today's market most products are scalable to the unit level, resulting in an integrated system which allows physicians, nurses, allied professionals and various back office staff to document patient details in a confidential and efficient manner. But implementation of EMR systems requires significant training of nurses and clinical staff on a broad scale. Hospitals face the challenge of preparing clinical staff specifically registered nurses while continuing to care for their patients without compromising continuity and quality of patient care.

Education of the Indispensable Majority

Registered Nurses typically comprise almost 30% of hospital's personnel and make up the largest group of employees requiring detailed training for launching an EMR system. Since nursing staff are tasked with providing front line patient care 24/7 there is little time for the in-depth training necessary for a successful EMR implementation. Nurses who are educated and equipped to meet the significant changes for safe EMR implementation will have an easier time moving to the new EMR and will have higher job satisfaction. The obvious challenge is how to train the nursing staff while maintaining the facilities standard of care.

Prescription for Success: An Interim Temporary Staffing Team

A simple solution to meet the obvious challenge is to partner with an interim temporary staffing team. While a facility's nurses are schooled on new EMR software, flexible computer proficient and high quality nurses are available through

temporary staffing to deliver first rate care. Temporary labor should be confirmed one to two months prior to the targeted training date. Chief Nurse Executives and their partners in human resources can easily locate a temporary staffing agency to meet this need for a rapid response. Using a recognized workforce provider that is capable of fulfilling the critical requirements will ease the burdens associated with covering staffing during this important transition. The prescription for finding a successful temporary staffing team includes the following:

- **A Logistics Liaison** - A knowledgeable liaison enables hospital personnel to concentrate on mastering the EMR system. This individual coordinates logistics for interim nurse associates and works with the hospital's staffing office to maximize productivity.
- **Assurance** - References and essential quality assurance from the vendor must be stellar. Anything short of a guarantee that an EMR project will be fully staffed with high quality nurses and colleagues will likely endanger success of the implementation.
- **Flexible coverage and assignment length requirement** - Weekend, evening and overnight coverage is a must until all staff members are adequately trained. Contingency staff may be needed for 4, 6, or 8 weeks, depending on the complexity and size of the hospital.

In Summary

The Federal Government will require that all hospitals be fully converted to Electronic Medical Records (EMR) system by the year 2014. As hospitals across the country prepare to implement their EMR system, temporary nurses are standing by to aid in the transition. A flexible, project-experienced nursing agency will be indispensable during these conversions.