

Team huddles foster communication and collaboration in emergency department

BAYSTATE MEDICAL CENTER

The emergency department (ED) at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield is the only Level 1 trauma, ST-elevation myocardial infarction and interventional stroke center in the western part of the state. The Baystate ED is the largest in the western part of Massachusetts, with 72,000 square feet, 94 licensed bays that spans and over 110,000 patient visits each year. Eighteen bays are dedicated to the care of children under the age of 18, and nine are designed for behavioral health patients. The remaining 67 bays are divided into four separate, but connected, pods for adult care. In this very large and busy ED, regular communication is key to managing flows of patients and information.

Challenge

Recognizing that a critical component of ED care is communication between providers and nurses, staff began using huddles to better manage flow and improve the patient experience.

Action

At the beginning of every shift, nurses and physicians in one of the four ED pods call a quick huddle with anyone who is available, including techs and administrative assistants. Each huddle begins with each staff member sharing their name and role. Then, they talk about the day's challenges, whether equipment or trauma services, and strategies for managing demand and productivity. Led collaboratively by the attending physician and nursing pod lead, the huddle takes only about five to seven minutes and bolsters communication and teamwork within the ED.

In addition, the ED has made it a requirement that each provider communicate directly with the primary nurse for every single patient at least once during the shift. This communication could range from a very brief check-in on a patient with a minor sprain or a more in-depth conversation on a patient with a complex condition.

