

Evidence, innovation and good practice on a topic inspired by safety discussions held at the WUTH Safety Summit

Why are ward rounds a patient safety concern?

Ward rounds are complex clinical activities, critical to providing high quality, safe care for patients in a timely, relevant manner. They provide an opportunity for the multidisciplinary team to come together to review a patient's condition and develop a co-ordinated plan of care, while facilitating full engagement of the patient and/or carers in making shared decisions about care¹.

How can technology support ward rounds?

Advances in technology have led to an increased use of electronic systems within modern health care. This includes the use of electronic health records, electronic checklists², electronic handover³, the use of mobile devices at the bedside (tablets / iPads)⁴ and, more recently, robotic drones that enable a doctor to communicate with the patient and the ward round team remotely⁵.

A 2017 Australian study examined why new ways of working with technology are accepted and adopted (or not) by doctors in a critical care setting. The authors found that technology can disrupt some aspects of existing routines, even where these are long-established rituals. Resistance arose when the new technology did not fit with the 'logic of care'⁶.

Further reading

1. [SAFER patient flow bundle: ward rounds](#). NHS Improvement , Sept 2017
2. Conroy, K. M.; Elliott, D.; Burrell, A. R. [Testing the implementation of an electronic process-of-care checklist for use during morning medical rounds in a tertiary intensive care unit: a prospective before-after study](#). Annals of intensive care; Dec 2015; vol. 5 (no. 1); p. 60.
3. Oakley, B; Hunter, J. B. [Implementing an electronic patient handover system](#). British journal of hospital medicine; Jan 2017; vol. 78 (no. 1); p. 16-19.
4. Fleischmann, R. et al. [Tablet computers with mobile electronic medical records enhance clinical routine and promote bedside time: a controlled prospective crossover study](#). Journal of neurology; Mar 2015; vol. 262 (no. 3); p. 532-540.
5. Croghan, S. M. et al. [Robot Assisted Surgical Ward Rounds: Virtually Always There](#). Journal of innovation in health informatics; May 2018; vol. 25 (no. 1); p. 982.
6. Plumb, J. J. et al. [Technology meets tradition: The perceived impact of the introduction of information and communication technology on ward rounds in the intensive care unit](#). International journal of medical informatics; Sep 2017; vol. 105 ; p. 49-58.

For more details or to request an electronic copy of the below, or if you'd like an Evidence Bite on another topic, please contact the Library & Knowledge Service at wuth.lks@nhs.net or ext. 8610.