SinglePointe from the Nurse's Perspective

White Paper

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Abstract

Automated dispensing cabinets have increased hospital medication-use efficiency dramatically over the past 15 years. SinglePointe™ from Omnicell is an automated patient-specific medication management solution that reduces the risk of medication errors by improving the storage, dispensing, and tracking of patient-specific medications. This white paper describes the benefits of the SinglePointe system from the nurse's perspective, based on its use in a mid-sized hospital in Minnesota.

Overview

Medication-use efficiency in hospitals has increased dramatically over the past 15 years, due to significant integration of automated dispensing cabinets into the hospital drug distribution process. However, accommodating patient-specific medications in the automated dispensing cabinets has been difficult.

Hospitals typically store only about 80 percent of patients' medication needs in automated dispensing cabinets. The other 20 percent are handled in a variety of ways, creating extra work for both pharmacy and nursing. The following are some common examples:

- Patient-specific multi-use items (e.g., eye drops, creams, inhalers)
- Patient-specific controlled substances (e.g., morphine drip)
- Patient-specific IV admixtures
- Patient's medications brought from home
- Infrequently used medications on a nursing unit
- Non-formulary medications

SinglePointe helps reduce risks to patient safety and increases staff efficiency by creating a closed-loop distribution system. SinglePointe reduces the risk of medication errors by ensuring that every medication needed for every patient is stored in one convenient location on the patient care unit. Unlike conventional automated cartfill and cabinet systems, SinglePointe makes all of a patient's medications readily available at all times. It allows clinicians to avoid error-prone work-arounds and delays, and focus on patient care.

Experience in the field

Rice Memorial Hospital is a 136-bed hospital located in Willmar, Minnesota, serving a 14-county region in west-central Minnesota. Rice Memorial implemented SinglePointe in February 2008. Alice Branstner, R.N., works as a Nurse Unit Coordinator on a 40-bed, medical/surgical unit at Rice. Branstner has 18 years of clinical experience, and she participated in the hospital's SinglePointe implementation.

Prior to implementing SinglePointe, all patient-specific medications at Rice Memorial were stored in locations in the automated dispensing cabinets that were identified only by room number. These patient-specific medications were not linked to the patient's profile.

If nurses did not find the medication they were looking for in the patient profile, they used a common workaround to attempt to find the medication: selecting the "room number" order to obtain the non-profiled medication. This posed a risk to patient safety as there were no clinical checks on these medications since the medications in the "room number" bin were not listed on the patient profile. In addition, medications that had been discontinued for a given patient could still be accessed by nurses and administered to patients. Missing medications were a frequent occurrence with this system.

Experience with SinglePointe

The nurses at Rice Memorial have found that SinglePointe allows safe, efficient storage and tracking of patient-specific medications. Since Rice Memorial began using SinglePointe, the nurses consider the medication process to be much safer, and without taking any additional nursing time.

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SinglePointe automatically assigns a bin to each patient for patient-specific medications not normally stocked in that cabinet. Medications in the patient-specific bins can only be accessed through the patient profiles via active medication orders. When the nurse selects a medication from a SinglePointe bin and that bin also contains a discontinued medication, the SinglePointe system warns the nurse to remove the discontinued medication and return it to the pharmacy.

Training
The SinglePointe process is relatively easy to learn because it is designed around natural and intuitive nursing workflows. SinglePointe requires only about 20 minutes of training. Nurses reported no difficulties when changing over from the previous system, and adapting to the new process took only a few days. SinglePointe builds on the Omnicell system, which was already familiar to the nursing staff at Rice Memorial.

Ease of use
The nurses at Rice Memorial have found the cabinet touch screen process to be highly intuitive, and with the implementation of SinglePointe, no additional nursing time was needed. Navigating screens is not difficult, and switching between "active" and "Scheduled Meds" medications screens for any given patient is straightforward and easy. The nurse simply touches the appropriate button on the screen. Nurses also report fewer missing medications due to the changed medication processes associated with SinglePointe.

Increased safety
SinglePointe complements the "five rights of medication use" by reducing the likelihood of errors, thus making the nurse's job easier. However, it does not replace the need for the nurse's clinical judgment—medications must always be double-checked prior to administration.

The automated dispensing cabinets, in conjunction with SinglePointe, incorporate vital information on the display screen. This saves nurses' time by eliminating the need to cross check patient records manually. Both generic and trade names of medications are displayed, reducing confusion when, for example, the brand-name version of a drug has been prescribed, but the generic version is stocked in the cabinet.

Scheduled Medications feature
To augment the SinglePointe software, the nurses at Rice Memorial use the "scheduled medications" tab, which lists all scheduled medications for each patient—all the currently-due scheduled medications are listed together. By using "select all" from the scheduled meds tab, the nurses do not need to select each med individually; this workflow saves nurses' time, enhances efficiency, and provides an easy double check.

SinglePointe Benefits
- **Enhances patient safety** by allowing clinicians to focus on patient care instead of tracking down missing medications
- **Increases pharmacy productivity** and efficiency by automating time-consuming manual processes
- **Improves efficiency** for all medication distribution models
- **Significantly decreases** instances of missing medications
- **Ensures effective management** and timely availability of patient's own medications
- **Speeds availability** of transfer medications

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SinglePointe Features

- **Single point of access** for all patient medications
- **Profile-based access** to all patient medications
- **Full safety checks** on all patient medications
- **Intelligent, just-in-time** restock process
- **Automatic management** of discontinued medications, transfer patient medications, and discharged patient medications
- **Storage and control** for patient's home medications

The nurses at Rice Memorial are very happy with SinglePointe. It enhances patient safety, makes nurses more efficient, and results in fewer missing doses. Given the efficiency improvements and greater control over discontinued medications, the hospital's pharmacists are also pleased with the SinglePointe system.

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