Five Ways Clinical Decision Support Tools Optimize the Patient Experience

Evidence-based, current information at your fingertips – anytime, anywhere

S arah McKinley, MD, a Colorado-based pulmonologist and critical care physician, remembers the cumbersome way she and her colleagues used to access medical information stored in books and binders. Not only did these retrievals disrupt both clinical workflows and patient interactions, but there was no guarantee that the data was adequate or accurate.

Much has changed with the widespread adoption of electronic health records and web- and mobile-based platforms, leading to a new issue for healthcare practitioners. Rather than relying on limited sources of medical data, physicians and others must now sift through overwhelming volumes of information to make the best clinical decisions.

"A lot of people don't realize the firehose that healthcare providers are drinking from in terms of how much medical knowledge is changing," McKinley said. "Every day, new studies come out, new medications get released, new observations from all the data we have on patients changes the way we take care of patients."

All healthcare professionals want to provide the best care they can, she continued. That requires a better way to quickly and efficiently access clinical decision support (CDS) at the point of care – preferably a well-researched, evidence-based solution that optimizes the patient experience and leads to good patient outcomes.

CDS tools should support an optimal patient experience in the following five ways:

1. **Be available within the clinician's workflow.** Providers shouldn't have to stop a patient encounter, or arrive late to the next one, to look up information. Any needed information should be easily retrievable from a workstation computer or mobile device at the point of care.

2. **Help foster communications between provider and patient.** By sharing what a physician, nurse or other healthcare worker finds on screen, the tool can be a bridge, rather than a barrier, between patients and their clinicians. These tools can ensure a physician reviews all options available to the patient in user-friendly terms and should help supplement the spoken word with printouts, QR codes and/or infographics that visualize complicated concepts and make them easier to understand.

3. **Display rigorously researched information.** Both the clinician and patient need to be able to trust the information they are reading and reviewing, particularly given the wealth of misinformation and disinformation promulgated through social media and other websites.

4. **Publish new medical data in a timely manner.** Clinicians want to be confident that they have the most recent available information on new tools, procedures and medications to help with clinical decisions.

5. **Be customizable.** Clinical users should be able to configure a tool to suit their practice and patient population. After all, of course, neurosurgeons will need different data and important updates than general physicians will.

The right CDS tool can build confidence and trust

The ideal CDS solution combines vetted, evidence-based information and expert guidance in a user-friendly, personalized format and satisfies all five of the above requirements by delivering accurate medical answers at the point of care. Such a tool also fosters a stronger bond between provider and patient, since both can be confident that the clinician is using the most current medical information to assess health issues and recommend care plans.

"It's that confidence and trust that's so important," explained McKinley, who serves as a consulting physician for EBSCO Information Services (EBSCO) to ensure the company's products fulfill clinical support expectations. "Patients need to know that their provider is well informed and has their best interest at heart, and that they are not just making it up on the fly or repeating what they learned back in med school when there are newer treatments."

McKinley noted that the pandemic highlighted weaknesses in provider-patient relationships that might undermine healthcare organizations' goals of improving the patient experience. At times, patients had limited access to their providers while COVID-19 information was continually evolving.

"If patients don't trust, understand and become involved in their own care, the chances for harm, for errors, for failure in the healthcare system are very high," she explained. "The patient should be at the center of all the healthcare system does. I think tools that bring the most accurate, capable care directly to the patient-physician bond – and to the

patient's understanding – are the only way to restore that trust and that vision of the healthcare system as a patient-centered system."

Having advanced CDS tools, such as DynaMedex™ from EBSCO, at a provider's fingertips can also help alleviate another longstanding issue made worse by the pandemic: physician burnout. "We know physicians are more likely to make errors and have shorter careers if they burn out," McKinley said. "I think having powerful clinical decision support tools can help bring them back to what they went to med school for, which is to help people."

To learn more about how Clinical Decision Support Solutions from EBSCO can help improve patient outcomes, increase engagement, and support value-based care, visit www.ebsco.com/health-care/ clinical-decision-support.

About EBSCO

EBSCO Clinical Decision Support Solutions target frontline providers and offer evidence-based clinical decision support tools, shared decision-making resources and peer-reviewed content to support operational and clinical workflow excellence. Through vision, action and innovation, EBSCO leadership has developed transformational solutions to ensure product growth, services and technologies that meet the needs of our customers, providers, and learners worldwide.