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How to Best Train Staff on New Technology

Have a plan and find your superusers **BY ROBERT KURTZ**

An ASC's ability to effectively train staff on how to use new technology is a high-stakes proposition, says Michael Fahey, information technology manager for Magna Health Systems, which operates ASCs in Chicago and Bedford Park, Illinois.

"If a staff member does not know how to best use technology, uses it wrong or does not use it at all when they are supposed to, that could affect patient care, compliance, financial performance and staff enjoyment of their job," Fahey says.

When her ASC decided to switch from a paper-based electronic medical record (EMR) to a cloud-based system, Ashley Hilliard, RN, administrator of Deerpath Ambulatory Surgery Center in Morris, Illinois, realized the importance of training. "If our staff were not ready to go on the new EMR when we went live, we knew we could run into bottlenecks and might need to run a reduced schedule."

Developing and Executing a Plan

ASCs should not jump into training without a plan developed specifically for a new piece of technology, Fahey says. "Define what you intend to do with the technology and how your employees are going to access it, then start diving into how you will teach this," he says. "Depending on how many areas of your operations the technology will affect, you are likely going to want to have at least a few different people on your team involved in highlighting the needs of those different areas and then turning that information into practical training."

Those people are likely to be your "superusers" or "leads," says Michelle Eilander, RN, administrator of Ankeny Medical Park Surgery Center in Ankeny, Iowa. When crafting a



training plan, Eilander looks for how to best deploy her superusers, which she did when her ASC recently added new imaging software. She also carefully considers the different learning styles of the members of her team. "Knowing and catering to people's learning styles is huge."

Build in plenty of time for staff to practice using the technology, Fahey advises. "About 90 percent of what people learn comes from sitting with a trainer, having the trainer show them what they need to do and then trying to do it. Once they get the hang of it, repetition becomes key."

Before going live conduct a trial run of the solution involving all users. This can be in a training environment or a situation monitored by superusers, Fahey says. Make the training "right-sized" for the facility and the technology, he recommends. Right-sizing includes identifying which staff will use the technology, how they will use it, what training they need to use the technology, who will be delivering training and how to provide the train-

ing efficiently, he says. Keep in mind that what works for one ASC may not work for another, he adds.

Maintaining Success

Training should not end once a piece of technology is no longer new. "When new features or processes for our EMR are announced, my business office director and I learn about them through webinars hosted by the vendor," Hilliard says. "We then take this information and share it with our staff."

Be patient with team members who are struggling to learn. "Discuss their experience and work to understand their frustrations," Eilander says. "If you have the option, shift the responsibility of using the technology to someone who is more comfortable."

"Cherish and nourish those who know what they are doing so they do not feel like they are being taken advantage of," Fahey says. "Some people filling a superuser or trainer role may be looking for additional compensation, but even a 'thank you' can go a long way." «