The alignment of education and technology is on hospital administrators’ radar screens nationally, especially with today’s new health reforms and community health initiatives. There’s enormous potential for innovative solutions that can help deliver customized patient care and improve outcomes and patient satisfaction. This merger of technology and hands-on care has always appealed to clinicians, but significant gaps existed between the vision of what could be and reality.

Anyone working in healthcare today is aware of the tremendous pace of advancing technologies. Innovations have become so commonplace that we’ve come to take for granted the many amazing breakthroughs in areas such as diagnostic science, where new tools have made tremendous strides in improving patient care and outcomes.

These advancements require significant investment, and the politics of competition, funding and government requirements permeate every buying decision. Like any successful enterprise, hospitals must quantify the value of new systems versus the cost benefit. One area that was often difficult to measure financially was patient education. Sure, it was widely recognized as an important component of patient care, but the time commitment and resource requirements needed to deliver effective patient education were cost prohibitive for many hospitals.

In today’s healthcare landscape, new technologies have helped provide some answers to the cost challenges of patient education. Additionally, emerging mandates and reimbursement criteria have elevated the focus of maximizing patient outcomes and reducing readmissions. We now know for certain what we’ve long believed: That proactive, focused patient education can have a profound impact on measurable outcomes.

Interactive technologies are able to blend the key concepts of a quality education plan like video-on-demand, prescriptive ordering, comprehension assessments and patient-specific education. In addition, these systems link with care coordination and electronic medical record systems (EMRs), providing not only the return-on-investment metrics for hospitals, but additional tools to maximize resource allocation, enhance patient engagement, and increase patient satisfaction. With new meaningful use mandates, federal compliance requirements, and new reimbursement criteria moving forward, hospitals that are not looking into updating their patient education and community health strategies will fall behind.

The days of wheeling carts with VHS machines and monitors into patient rooms, and chasing the one videotape the hospital has on breastfeeding are waning. Today, every patient room has a television set, and increasingly they have access to multiple channels and customized health programming. New technologies deliver automated content to patients through customized triggers in the ADT or EMR systems, and additionally engage the patient and their network of family members and caregivers. However, although the technology exists, in many cases we are just scratching the surface. Nurses continue to be burdened with antiquated workflows and time-consuming tasks associated with patient and caregiver education. Fortunately, that is changing. The link between EMRs, patient satisfaction and government reimbursement is redefining educational and budgetary priorities. Hospitals are discovering that investing in interactive patient education and engagement systems helps address new meaningful use mandates and leads to improved patient outcomes, reduced readmissions and increased reimbursements. As nurses, we can be powerful advocates for improving
the patient experience and related clinical outcomes. These new technologies can streamline our workflows, help improve care, and close
the chasm that exists between information collection, reporting, and the data and processes we need to truly empower the patient in their
own care.

To help address this disconnect, our voices can help raise awareness among EMR providers regarding our challenges, and we can ask
them to work with us to find the solutions we need to more effectively streamline our workflow efforts, enhance patient care and improve
patient outcomes. We already play a key role in listening to patients, addressing their needs and providing care, and we have a lot to offer
with regard to the technology solutions that can help us do our jobs better and with greater efficiency.