

EXPERTISE RELATED TO THE LATEST TECHNOLOGIES

EXPLORE spoke with Brian Tallmadge, CHESP, assistant chief, Environmental Management Services, at Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in Charleston, S.C., about the latest technologies available for EVS professionals.

Q: What technologies have you seen/used that aid in better patient care? How can they impact and improve patients' experience of care and HCAHPS?

We've found that the more interaction our Environmental Services (EVS) and supervisors have with patients and their families, the higher our HCAHPS scores – regardless of true quantifiable cleanliness levels. When our EVS managers and supervisors interact with patients and explain what they are doing – whether a simple visual inspection, quality check or fluorescent gel monitoring – patients seem to enjoy that interaction and their perception of their experience seems to improve. In some ways the old “smile and a handshake” will never be replaced by technology as it relates to the experience of care.

Q: How is your EVS department currently using technology to organize and streamline efforts?

Internally we have created a collaborative site that tracks all of our data – everything from EVS inspection scores to bed turnover times. All of this data is aggregated so we can analyze which EVS technician is performing well or needs improvement, as well as the ability to see what objects or areas are getting lower inspection scores so we can focus our efforts to improve overall performance. We also track everything from privacy curtain change-out schedules to when floors are stripped and refinished. Doing this helps us with scheduling and projecting workloads.

Q: In what ways have you witnessed technology helping you “do more with less”?

We use a restroom management system. Restrooms are a high visibility, high traffic and traditionally high complaint area that can make or break the perception of cleanliness in any public facility, especially hospitals. The management system schedules and monitors restroom checks and also allows visitors and staff to alert EVS of restrooms that need service. Staff and supervisors get text messages whenever someone utilizes the service to bring their attention to supply, service or cleanliness issues in a particular restroom.

Q: How does your facility use disinfection technologies? How has this affected outcomes and efforts?

We try to use as much disinfection technology as we can and try to get trials or demos to evaluate what will work for us. We currently use everything from antimicrobial patient privacy curtains to UV disinfection technology. Thankfully, even before introducing technologies, we've historically had low HAI transmission rates. Since introducing some of the newer technologies, our rates have lowered even further.

Q: During outbreaks, what technologies do you use and have you found to be most beneficial?

Most recently, our UV light disinfection system has been very helpful. With the recent removal of the *C. difficile* spore kill claim on some disinfection products,

we sought to find a replacement product to clean and disinfect *C. difficile* rooms. We are fortunate enough to have a UV system in our hospital as an adjunct to manual cleaning.

Q: In the future, how do you see EVS and technology fitting into the larger picture together, and how do you see it evolving?

I think EVS has been slow to embrace change and new technology due to a number of reasons, not the least of which was budget constraints. We've seen some new and cost effective technologies recently emerge that can be real game changers. Many of these technologies can also be used as reporting tools that can draw attention to EVS's accomplishments and/or to help influence senior management of your need for resources. As EVS managers, we need to be comfortable presenting to the C-suite. Technology can help us do so more convincingly. ●



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and has more than 20 years management/leadership experience in a broad range of industries. In his current role, he is responsible for budgeting, workload planning, quality assurance inspection and strategic planning for diverse service line that is responsible for infection control, environmental services, waste management and procurement.