

USING THE POWER OF EMR IN A PANDEMIC

DR. MICHAEL BOUTON

CHIEF MEDICAL INFORMATION OFFICER, EMERGENCY MEDICINE
PHYSICIAN, NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/HARLEM

My role: I help ensure we maximize the use of our electronic medical record system to support our COVID-19 response. Thanks to the unified EMR, we are able to coordinate action as a health system and have a better view into our patients' medical stories. We implemented COVID-19 note templates in the EMR that quickly captures the necessary clinical information while reducing the burden of documentation.

We've also standardized order sets in line with national best practices and updated them at the speed necessary to match this rapidly changing crisis. As our critical care population swelled, we aggressively pushed out monitors that are fully integrated into EMR, so that staff are free to care for their patients without needing to transcribe their vital signs.

On the COVID-19 Frontlines: During a recent shift in the ED at Harlem, I cared for a nursing home patient who was gravely ill with COVID-19. I knew very little else about the patient. Emergency physicians are used to making critical decisions based on limited information, but when these decisions are around end-of-life care, the stakes are particularly high.

My patient had never been seen in our health system, but using "Care Everywhere" I was able to access the records from multiple other health systems. We have agreements to share information across most of the regional health care systems that no longer require paperwork to be filled out before accessing these records. I was able to see the patient's long list of comorbidities including a form of dementia that had robbed them of their ability to speak. I was also able to find documentation that made clear their goals of care in such a circumstance.



So, instead of invasive procedures, I spent the next few hours focusing on their comfort. Sadly, my patient died that evening. But during my conversation with the family, they got to speak with a doctor who knew their loved one's full medical history.

Impact of COVID-19: It's been amazing to see and be part of how we've come together as a health system in a way that I have never seen before. We match capacity to bed demand on an enterprise, rather than hospital level. On a daily basis, we transfer patients from our hardest hit hospitals to our other facilities without missing a step; the labs, notes, vitals are all there. It's impressive.

Managing Stress: I do daily FaceTime calls with my daughter and wife. It is the best stress relief possible. I also do YouTube exercise videos to stay in less bad shape while not going outside.