



CHOOSING THE RIGHT COMMUNICATION WHITEBOARD FOR PATIENT ROOMS



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By the Numbers: The Benefits of Patient Whiteboards



75% of patients found whiteboards to be helpful in improving communication with nurses¹



Well-designed whiteboards can increase a patient's satisfaction with their doctor's explanation of their care **by up to 12.6%**²



When patients are more satisfied and confident in their care, their **30-day risk-standardized readmission rates decrease**³

Effective patient care and patient satisfaction extend beyond the care team's knowledge and experience, access to the latest technology and treatment options, and scheduling and affordability. Numerous research studies have shown that environmental factors — like the aesthetics and cleanliness of facilities, clear and consistent communication between care teams, the patient, and the patient's family, and the efficiency in which the staff provides service to the patient — all play a role in patient outcomes and patient satisfaction.

Our most recent whitepaper focused on one key environmental factor — creating and designing hospital rooms that improve patient satisfaction. Specifically, we studied the proper use and integration of patient communication whiteboards into the overall room design. Factors that play a role in the effectiveness of whiteboards and ultimately in overall patient satisfaction, include:

- Aesthetics:** The overall color, shape and layout of the whiteboard. This allows the whiteboard to fit seamlessly into each unique treatment setting, match the care facility's overall look and feel, and provide critical information for both the patient and care team.
- Placement:** Whiteboard placement cannot be an afterthought when determining the layout of patient rooms. Place communication boards in a location where the patient can clearly read the text while sitting in their bed and is easily accessible by the care team, while maintaining privacy of the patient's information.
- Cleanability and longevity:** It's important to understand the different whiteboard materials that are available, with consideration given to not only long-term aesthetics, but also to surfaces that limit bacterial retention and are durable enough to withstand frequent cleanings with hospital-grade cleaners.



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It is a best practice to integrate whiteboards into patient room design, it's equally important to understand the key elements of whiteboard design to optimize the patient experience, improve the effectiveness of the care staff, and remain compliant with applicable guidelines.

Key factors to consider when choosing the right whiteboard for patient rooms, including:

- 1. Patient-Centered Design:** What information can be included on patient whiteboards and how an optimally designed whiteboard can improve patient satisfaction and increase HCAHPS scores.
- 2. Whiteboard Construction & Writing Surfaces:** Examine the pros and cons of the various materials used for patient whiteboards and how choosing the right surface can help prevent the spread of infections in healthcare settings.
- 3. Patient Privacy:** Review HIPAA guidelines for whiteboards and how to balance the protection of patient privacy with designing an effective communication tool.



6.4
Up

Effectively designed patient room whiteboards can increase HCAHPS scores by up to 6.4 points

1. PATIENT-CENTERED DESIGN: THE KEY DESIGN CONCEPTS OF PATIENT ROOM WHITEBOARDS

Every whiteboard placed in a care facility has a purpose. They can be used to foster healthy communication between patients and care teams, increase safety, allow patients to become more involved in their care, and keep care teams organized. Regardless of the purpose, approaching the design of a whiteboard begins with a question: what is the primary use for the board?

Understanding the ideas and research that have improved these concepts over the years allows for the creation of the most effective whiteboard solution possible.

Increasing HCAHPS Scores & Patient-Centered Care

Patient room whiteboards enhance healthy communication between care teams and patients. They also provide patients with a wealth of information to reference during their stay in a facility. Both these primary functions are designed to lead to the same outcome: happier and more satisfied patients and increased HCAHPS scores.

Research conducted over decades has revealed the benefits of placing whiteboards in patient rooms.⁴ The results of these studies have marked an increase in HCAHPS scores and an objective improvement in the level of care hospitals provide to patients. Patient room whiteboards have improved the number of patients who knew their:

- Physician's name and
- Goals for their stay

The research also revealed that the patients who interacted with whiteboards were more satisfied with their hospital stay overall.



Further case studies conducted by hospitals have found that the implementation and use of whiteboards in their facilities resulted in notable increases in patient satisfaction with their doctor's explanation of treatment and with increases in both HCAHPS and Press-Ganey scores.²

Why HCAHPS Scores Matter

- HCAHPS scores are directly tied to Medicare reimbursements.⁵
- Hospital ratings and profits climb when HCAHPS scores are high (higher HCAHPS scores are also linked to better nurse communication).⁶
- HCAHPS scores are publicly published and used by potential patients when choosing a facility.

The Science Behind Whiteboard Information Fields

Determining which information fields to include is the most vital step in whiteboard design. They transform whiteboards into communication tools used to educate patients about their care, reduce patient anxiety, and improve the efficiency of the patient care team. The relationship between the information on the whiteboard and patient satisfaction is an area where researchers focus their efforts, which has led to one very important question:

Which information fields should be included on a patient whiteboard?

There are many fields that are conducive to patient communication and satisfaction, however through extensive research, the top five information fields patients interact with as:⁷

- **Date:** staying more than a few days in a hospital, especially when under the duress of illness or injury, can be disorienting to patients. Displaying the date on whiteboards gives patients a sense of time and grounds them to the outside world, which can be calming.
- **Nurse Information:** nurses interact with patients more than any other care team member. A patient's nurse also changes a few times a day as shifts end and new personnel come on duty. Displaying the names of care team members, including physicians, therapists, and especially nurses, helps patients remember who they are being treated by. Forgetting someone's name can be stressful, and this simple information can bring added satisfaction and relaxation during their stay.
- **Pain Scales:** a patient's pain will vary at different points in the day, usually based on when they last received medication, how long it has been since they got out of bed, and many other factors. Emotive icons can accompany the 11-point Numeric Rating Scale (NRS-11), allowing patients to visually express their pain levels.



See how whiteboard uniformity can impact the efficiency of care teams, a hospital's brand appeal and patient anxiety levels.

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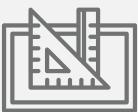
- **Room Information:** Studies show that up to 40% of patients and visitors have become lost in a hospital, which can decrease customer satisfaction scores.⁸ Including basic room information like room number, floor number, hospital wing (or applicable area) and the room's phone number helps patients know where they are in a facility, information that can eventually be relayed to visitors.
- **Goal of the Day:** healing can be a long process that has many steps, and while patients find value in seeing their ultimate discharge goal and date written down on a whiteboard, having a "goal of the day" field allows patients to compartmentalize the stages of their recovering process. Seeing their goal of the day can reduce stress and anxiety in patients while keeping them focused on what needs to be done in the short term.

Additional fields of interest for patients include:

- **Treatment/Medication Schedules:** (e.g. exams, procedures, next medication dosage times, mealtimes). Timing of treatments are often asked about by patients who are anxious about what comes next in their treatment. They are also useful for informing patients when they can have food, medicine, visitors, etc.
- **Hourly Rounding Logs:** helpful for patient's family and friends, letting them know that their loved one is being consistently checked on during the day and throughout the night.
- **Patient Feedback/Questions:** this is an interactive field that can be used by patients and their visitors to leave questions, comments and concerns for care teams, allowing them to be addressed the next time a physician or nurse checks on the patient.



Name, date and similar fields require relatively little space, **while comments, questions, etc. need to occupy greater amounts of the whiteboard's real estate.**



For maximum legibility, place patient room whiteboards **within 10 feet of the patient's bed.**

Whiteboard Orientation, Shape, Size, and Information Field Layout

Orientation, size and the overall layout of a whiteboard can make or break the effectiveness of it as a patient communication tool.

Layout Plays an Important Role

The layout of a whiteboard can be as important as the information included on it. Efficiently organizing information fields makes the board easier to read and use, more aesthetically pleasing, and better able to assist in patient communication.

Versatility in whiteboard layouts is an added benefit of custom whiteboards, as they can include a variety of headers, footers, and multi-column formats. However, there needs to be a balance between the size of the board and the number of information fields included.

Overcrowding a board can lead to decreased use. It also limits the amount of writing space for each information field. Consider sizing information fields based on the information that will be written down.

Backgrounds, Images and Other Design Elements

Design elements like logos, images, patterns and colored backgrounds make whiteboards far more appealing and pleasant for patients to look at and interact with. They also allow boards to be tailored to the hospital's brand and overall design scheme, but these elements impact more than the aesthetics of the whiteboard.

The colors used, the opacity of images, backgrounds, and patterns, and the placement of design elements can alter the legibility of fonts that are placed over them. In order to make boards easily readable, font styles and colors must be compatible with the background images and patterns they overlay.

The whiteboard features the following sections and icons:

- 1. Logo:** JMMC Johnson Memorial Medical Center, A Partner of Saint Francis Care.
- 2. Current Date:** Today's Plan Is: _____
- 3. Care Team:** Emergency Contact Name: _____ Phone #: _____
- 4. Daily Goals & Discharge Info:** Emergency Contact Name: _____ Phone #: _____
- 5. Pain Management:** A scale from 0 to 10 with faces indicating levels of pain.



Accounting for Orientation and Size

It's important to factor in whiteboard placement into the overall room design, as wall space is often occupied by cabinets, televisions, windows, art, and the necessary treatment equipment.

For maximum legibility, place patient room whiteboards within 10 feet of the patient's bed, and remember as the distance from the bedside increases, so will the font size, which can limit the amount of information fields that can be placed on the board. If many information fields are required, it becomes necessary to increase the size of the board or place it closer to the patient's bedside.

Finding a Balance for Every Whiteboard

What is included on a whiteboard is just as important as what is not. Including too much information can make fonts smaller and harder to read. It can also be overwhelming for patients to see a wall of text that requires effort to find the information they need. It's important to understand what information is most relevant to patients and use that as the base for organizing a whiteboard's fields and determining the size and orientation of the board.



It's important for whiteboards to have an easy-to-clean surface that has a long lifespan, is highly resistant to ghosting and staining, and can be repeatedly cleaned with most hospital cleaners without worrying about degrading the surface or materials. **Both glassboards and traditional whiteboards, when made from the right materials, can possess these properties.**



Be sure the whiteboard surface can stand up to frequent cleanings **using the following hospital-grade cleaning products:**

- Glance® SC Glass & Multi-Surface Cleaner
- Dispatch® Hospital Cleaner Disinfectant with Bleach
- CaviWipes
- Goo Gone®
- Clorox® Bleach or Germicidal Wipes
- Steriplex® Wipes
- Virex 256 One Step
- A-456 II
- OXIVIR

2. UNDERSTANDING PATIENT WHITEBOARD CONSTRUCTION & SURFACE MATERIALS

In addition to designing a whiteboard with the most critical information and placing it in the proper spot in a patient's room, consideration must also be given to what the board is made of and how it's installed. These factors are often overlooked, but can play a key role in promoting patient safety:

- Only consider whiteboards made of durable materials and that have writing surfaces that can be regularly cleaned without degrading their quality and performance. Ensure the materials can be cleaned with hospital-grade cleaners.
- Look for whiteboards that use non-porous surface coatings, which limit the spread of bacteria and debris.
- Hang whiteboards so they sit flush against the wall, which prevents the collection of dust, debris and bacteria.
- Use tamper-resistant mounting hardware that securely holds the board tight to the wall, preventing whiteboards from being easily removed or dismantled.

Choosing the “Right” Whiteboard Surface

While classic graphic whiteboards are still used, glassboards have sharply risen in popularity over the years. Both types of whiteboard have their own significant aesthetic styles, features and benefits. There is no standard leaving hospitals to choose what fits their design scheme, the look and feel of their brand, personal preferences of the staff, and budget available for the project.

Classic Whiteboards

Classic graphic whiteboards have a timeless aesthetic that make them ideal for facilities that prefer the bright white surface of the board. They can be manufactured using a variety of materials that impact the cost, lifespan and performance of the whiteboard. This adds greater flexibility for budgets and customization options.

Some of the reasons to choose classic whiteboards include:

- Multiple surface and frame material options and colors.
- Ability to be manufactured into custom shapes for a unique appearance.
- Tamperproof mounting hardware make them ideal for emergency rooms, behavioral healthcare facilities, and other areas where safety is a priority.



Glass is 100% recyclable, which is ideal for sustainability-conscious organizations.

Glassboards

Glassboards have a sleek and modern aesthetic. Glassboards can come in a variety of thicknesses, however $\frac{1}{4}$ tempered safety glass that has been thermally treated for strength and safety is a superior choice for longevity and performance. Glass can also be painted any color, be manufactured as magnetic or non-magnetic, and have rounded or squared corners.

Some of the reasons to choose glassboards include:

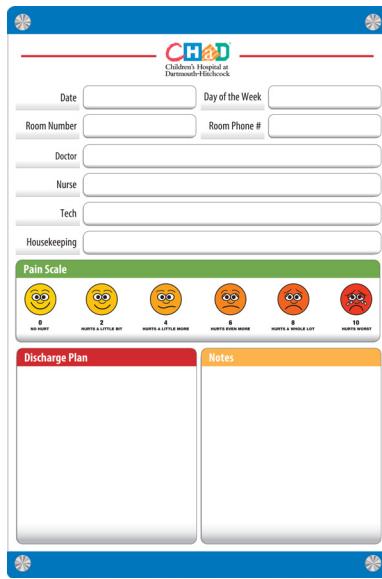
- Frameless designs that reduce their profile on walls.
 - Glass is a non-porous, material that resists bacteria growth.
 - Can feature double-sided, changeable inserts that display different information fields, languages and other design elements. 44% of hospitals in one survey said they have whiteboards in multiple languages.⁷
 - Glass is 100% recyclable, which is ideal for sustainability-conscious organizations and helps with LEED certification points.

TODAY'S DATE: PATIENT'S PREFERRED NAME: ANTICIPATED DISCHARGE DATE:		DIET: FAMILY CONTACT: PHONE NUMBERS:	TODAY'S TREATMENT TEAM: DOCTOR: NURSE: NURSES' NAMES: NURSE: NURSING ASST:		
PRECAUTIONS  Isolation: <input type="checkbox"/>  Protective: <input type="checkbox"/>  No visitors: <input type="checkbox"/>  No visitors: <input type="checkbox"/>		MOBILITY STATUS/DATE  BED MOBILITY: <input type="checkbox"/>  TRANSFERS: <input type="checkbox"/>  AMBULATION: <input type="checkbox"/>  OTHER: <input type="checkbox"/>	TOILETING ASSISTANCE  STATUS/DATE: <input type="checkbox"/>  TREATMENT: <input type="checkbox"/>  TIME: <input type="checkbox"/>  NAME OF PROVIDER: <input type="checkbox"/>		
PATIENT DEVICES  Oxygen: <input type="checkbox"/>  Ventilator: <input type="checkbox"/>  Dialysis: <input type="checkbox"/>  Other: <input type="checkbox"/>		RESPIRATORY STATUS  TREATMENT: <input type="checkbox"/>  TIME: <input type="checkbox"/>  NAME OF PROVIDER: <input type="checkbox"/>			
PATIENT PREFERENCES  Preferences: <input type="checkbox"/>		FAMILY COMMUNICATION  Status: <input type="checkbox"/>			

CLASSIC CUSTOM WHITEBOARD

 Dignity Health. French Hospital Medical Center		Welcome to the Oppenheimer Family CENTER OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE	
Name <input type="text"/>		Treatment Plan	
Day/Date <input type="text"/>			
RN <input type="text"/>			
Physician/ PA/NP <input type="text"/>		Pain Scale	
Family Contact <input type="text"/>		 1 NO PAIN	
Allergies <input type="text"/>		 2 A LITTLE PAIN	
Diet <input type="text"/>		 3 A LITTLE MORE PAIN	
 4 MORE PAIN		 5 BOTH HURTS	
 6 HURTS A LOT		 7 HURTS THE MOST	
FALL RISK <input type="text"/>			

CHANGEABLE GLASSBOARD



3. PATIENT PRIVACY AND HIPAA COMPLIANCE

HIPAA provides specific guidelines that healthcare providers must follow regarding handling and storing protected healthcare information. These privacy laws are designed to protect patients while allowing the flow of information needed to provide and promote high quality care.

While these rules are well defined and typically strict in nature, there are exceptions made for incidental uses and disclosures that are essential to individuals receiving prompt and effective healthcare. Included in that section are specific references to “sign-in sheets and nurses whiteboards” being an accepted form of incidental disclosure. Specifically, HIPAA Privacy Rule Incidental Uses and Disclosures section⁹ states:

The HIPAA Privacy Rule is not intended to impede these customary and essential communications and practices and, thus, does not require that all risk of incidental use or disclosure be eliminated to satisfy its standards. Rather, the Privacy Rule permits certain incidental uses and disclosures of protected health information to occur when the covered entity has in place reasonable safeguards and minimum necessary policies and procedures to protect an individual’s privacy.

Reasonable Safeguards

While HIPAA allows for the use of patient whiteboards, healthcare providers still must have reasonable safeguards in place to protect the privacy of patient information and only require patients to provide the minimum necessary information to conduct business and provide effective care. Applied specifically to the usage of communication whiteboards in patient rooms, consideration is being given to:

- Limiting the fields on the whiteboard to only those pieces of information that foster improved communication and more effective care for the patient.
- Creating a whiteboard design that is legible and easily readable to anyone *inside* the patient room, but is difficult to read for anyone that is *outside* of the room.
- Install the whiteboards in a discreet location in the patient rooms. While they don’t need to be hidden behind a curtain or doors, mount them so they are out of sight from hallways or other public areas.

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ABOUT VIVIDBOARD

Since 2002, our patient engagement experts have manufactured custom whiteboards for hospitals and healthcare facilities across the US. Our patient room whiteboards are trusted by leading hospitals across the country because they incorporate evidence-based design and patient communication practices. This makes them far superior communication tools when compared to any other products on the market. We've done the research through case studies, whitepapers, and third-party surveys to truly become the experts in healthcare design and communication.

VividBoard is your one-stop-shop for all your healthcare whiteboard needs. Our customization capabilities enable you to incorporate a wide range of design elements and information fields onto the surface of the board, allowing you to create the right whiteboard solution based on your design. Whether you're designing a whiteboard for patient rooms, nurses' stations, or any other hospital area or healthcare setting, our years of experience and research can help you create the best whiteboard possible.

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