Nurses and other clinicians sometimes find it hard to interact with patients while trying to document information in the computer at the bedside. Patients may also perceive this as impersonal or detached, but there are some strategies that help both patients/families and clinicians to feel more comfortable with the computerized documentation process and to avoid negative perceptions.

First: Make contact:
Greet the patient and/or visitors first. Make eye contact. Explain what you are going to be doing and check to see if there is anything they need.

Next: Set the stage:
Explain that computerized charting is safer for the patient, and that it allows their caregivers to check things like their blood pressure, lab results, and other information from different locations. Computerized documentation reduces that chance of their being asked the same questions by multiple people. It also saves information about their history and medications so it is available the next time the come to our healthcare system for care.

Ask if they have any questions or concerns.

Provide or point out any written information further explaining the Electronic Health Record.

When you start to document:
You made contact – now keep contact. Don’t just type and look at the screen. Look at the patient when asking questions. Take time to look at the patient for verbal cues to how they may be feeling.

Privacy concerns:
If patients and families are concerned about privacy, let them know the steps taken at your site to keep patient information private and demonstrate those by your behavior. The privacy of information on the computer is safeguarded by many security measures. No one can access information without logging in with a unique ID and password and only caregivers with a need to know can view the information. Screens are always kept out of public view.

Technical problems
Do not convey your frustration to patients or families verbally or nonverbally. You may just perceive it is expressing frustration, but a patient might see it as something that could hinder care. Stay calm, explain there is a problem and that there are procedures in place to handle it. Let them know what you are going to do to handle the problem.

Source: