Meeting the Challenge: The Increasing Role of a Critical Access Hospital in a Busy Health System

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Case Report

The current condition analysis indicated the following:

1. Patients are being declined by PMH when beds are listed on an electronic board as available.
2. There is not an immediate, comprehensive plan for addressing reasons patients who are perceived by NHRCM’s case management team as appropriate for transfer are being declined.
3. Patients who have psychiatric diagnoses including dementia or aggressive behavior are a risk to place at any skilled nursing facility.
4. The clinicians are trained to take patients needing traction care but there are few, if any, patients admitting for this service.
5. PMH’s Swing Bed Unit can serve as a step-down unit for patients who are at the end of their acute stay but need more resources than a traditional skilled nursing facility can offer.

Plan:

Measure 1: Increase the number of referrals NHRCM’s Case Management Department is sending Pender Memorial Hospital. In fiscal year 2016, they sent an average of sixty-three (63) referrals per month.

Measure 2: Pender Memorial Hospital’s Acute/Swing bed unit will run a minimum of 85% of their staffed bed capacity of 16 or 13.6 patients/day by April 2019.

Measure 3: Pender Memorial Hospital’s Skilled Nursing Facility will run at a minimum of 90% of their staffed bed capacity of 39 patients or 35.1 patients per day by April 2019.

Measure 4: At least eighty percent of the patients on our skilled nursing unit should come from within the NHRCM healthcare system. As of December 31, 2018, sixty-nine percent (69%) of patients on our skilled nursing unit came from within the NHRCM system.

Measure 5: Pender Memorial Hospital will improve their financial performance.

Do:

1. Daily coordination between NHRCM and PMH of bed availability, referrals, offers, and admissions.
2. The Case Management team was instructed to offer all patients the opportunity to go to PMH without pre-screening with previously understood criteria.
3. Establish and utilize tele-sitters to enhance ability to handle patient load.
4. Enhance ability to support special needs of patients such as those requiring dialysis and those with bariatric needs.

Results/Outcomes:

While we are only six months into this project, the results we have seen to date are tremendous.

First, the referrals are up sixty-seven percent (67%). More referrals, combined with a slight increase in the percentage of offers, have been the main drivers of our increased census.

Second, the occupancy rate has exceeded goal. In FY18, the occupancy rate for the Acute/Swing Unit was fifty-three percent (53%) and the Skilled Nursing Unit was eighty-five percent (85%) compared to the January to June occupancy of 83% and 94% respectively.

Third, since January of 2019, the number of skilled nursing residents admitted from the NHRCM system have increased as well.

While the post-CABG patient program helped bed utilization at PMH increase, more was needed. A team was pulled together in January 2019 to work through a problem A3.

Discussion

The project to increase the role Pender Memorial Hospital plays in the System’s throughput has been a huge success meeting all five goals originally established. To date, we have been called upon to work with the other critical access hospitals (Dosher Memorial Hospital and Bladen County Hospital) in New Hanover Regional Medical Center’s service region to replicate this work.

Resources


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