TRANSFORMATIONAL CARE

Ministry Transformation in Action

Transformational Care at Catholic Healthcare West: Improving status accuracy of patients admitted from the Emergency Department

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Background:

Transformational Care (TC) is the system-wide initiative and methodology to change the way we do business at Catholic Healthcare West (CHW) by empowering the experts (front line staff) to participate in process diagnosis and improvement. Through customized utilization of lean and six sigma tools, TC aims to optimize the patient experience, improve organizational and financial performance, and change the culture of CHW. Through September 2010, more than 60 teams of front-line staff at over 15 hospitals have implemented TC solutions.

Objective:

Over the past year (August 2009-September 2010), as part of the CHW system-wide Transformational Care paradigm, over 15 hospitals have implemented solutions to increase status accuracy of patients admitted to hospital inpatient units from the Emergency Department (ED). Improving status accuracy of patients (correctly designated as inpatient or observation) results in increased revenue, decreased risk of RAC audits, and it ensures patients are admitted to the most appropriate unit for their condition.

A Bottoms up approach to achieve large operational gains:

TC promulgates culture change using lean implementation and consistent problem solving methodologies utilizing front line staff as the key decision makers to change processes and rewrite standard work. Front line staff become the main drivers of improvement because they own the process.

Over 100 Emergency Department physicians have been trained in process improvement solutions and are currently using the quick status determination tool when writing admission orders.

We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.
ALBERT EINSTEIN

Research Methods:

Using the Transformational Care philosophy of utilizing front-line staff to analyze opportunities and implement solutions, hospitals across CHW organized teams consisting of front-line ED staff (case managers, nurses, clerks) and physicians. To assess the current state, at each hospital these team members:

- Analyzed baseline data by conducting chart audits to determine the status accuracy
- Used Lean process improvement diagnostic tools and participated in first-hand observations and interviews to determine key issues causing status inaccuracies

Key issues and mindsets causing inaccuracies in patient status:

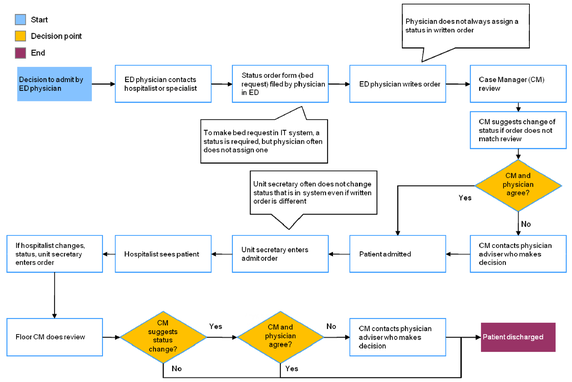
- Physicians are unaware of the criteria for status assignment
- Poor communication between physicians and Case Management
- Variable practices among Case Management staff on how they review admissions

Implementation Methods:

After ascertaining key issues, team members were able to implement customized solutions fitting the needs of their individual hospitals in addition to taking advantage of Transformational Care solutions implemented at prior hospitals. Common solutions (albeit customized at each facility) implemented across CHW include:

- Quick status determination tool to assist ED physicians when writing admission orders
- Standard processes for case managers on prioritizing which cases to review and in what order
- Visual signals on ED electronic tracking boards to flag case managers that a patient will be admitted
- Increased collaboration between ED physicians and case managers
- Regular audits to monitor continued progress
- Daily huddles to discuss metrics and briefly problem solve for continuous process improvement
- Posting of performance metrics in public areas
- Standard work created by staff to decrease variability and improve accuracy

Process mapping is used in the diagnostic phase to quickly identify bottlenecks and inefficiencies process



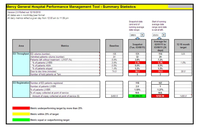
Status Accuracy Process Map (Pre-Implementation)

Visual and Performance Management ED Solutions Implemented Across CHW

Performance huddles are held daily to discuss metrics from the previous day and allow for brief problem solving when needed. Huddles aide in sustainability of improvements.

Standard work for Case Management was developed by team members and ensures accuracy in process flow and aids with accountability.

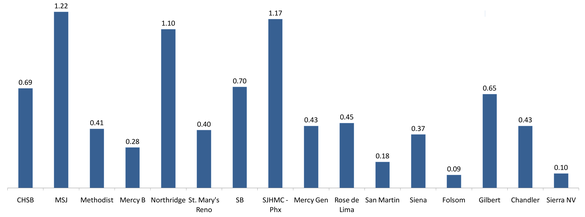
Daily Performance Management and Monitoring brings a renewed sense of urgency to the roles of front line staff. Key metrics are displayed daily and discussed during performance huddles



Results:

After conducting pre and post solution implementation chart audits of patients admitted from the ED, status accuracy leaving the ED increased from roughly 65-85% on average to 90-100% on average at all hospitals. Overall, this resulted in over $8.7 million in value across CHW. This consists of actual additional revenue collected for patients and the reduction of potential denials from RAC audits.

Status Accuracy Financial Improvement ($ millions)



TOTAL FINANCIAL IMPROVEMENT: 8.7 MILLION

Achieving Sustainability:

- 100% buy in from staff, physicians, managers/directors and executive leadership
- Executive leadership visibility and scripted rounding
- Staff and management accountability
- Visual and Performance Management Tools
- Peer to peer accountability
- Communication early and often
- Celebrate successes
- Develop and follow standard work

I never considered whether the patient should be admitted as Observation or Inpatient prior to TC. When they told me Case Management had a tool to assist me, I was skeptical, but this status determination tool is really quick and easy to use and I am glad we have it.

- ED Physician

Before I always had a hard time communicating with the ED physicians. TC has brought us together as a team and I really feel that my relationship with the ED physicians has dramatically improved.

- Case Manager

Catholic Healthcare West