

2006 Primaris Quality Award Saint Luke's Health System Home Care Services, Kansas City

Effective system change doesn't happen overnight. Saint Luke's Health System Home Care Services is a perfect example.

Tackling four measures simultaneously – oral medication, transferring, the status of surgical wounds and the number of surgical wounds – with Primaris, they realized a combined improvement of 62 percent between 2003 and 2005. Adding to that success, Saint Luke's Home Care also dramatically cut hospitalizations – dropping the rate by 342 percent during 2005.

Though they reaped the results last year, the facility's CEO and president, Carol Quiring, said the seeds of that improvement were first sowed five years ago. That's when the organization started working toward improving outcomes, adding technology and dedicating a full-time employee to focus on quality processes.

A major part of that change came from implementing technological improvements in communication between staff providing services on the same patient. About 60 laptop computers were deployed across the organization, allowing clinicians to collaborate daily on treatment plans and patient progress. Staff credited this increased communication as a major factor in reducing rehospitalization rates. "Case conferring is no longer conducted once a week or less, but daily," Quiring said.

They also began front-loading visits on physical therapy cases to increase mobility sooner and reduce falls. Nursing cases were also front-loaded to further address rehospitalization rates.

Two separate outcome-based quality improvement (OBQI) committees were also formed to specifically address improving oral medication and transferring. These committees of staff members worked on developing teaching tools to instill best practices into the care of patients.

"They came up with some very creative approaches," said Lisa Musgrave, the home health program manager at Primaris working with Saint Luke's Home Care. As an example, she said the transferring committee decided to produce a video that demonstrated a variety of transfer types. Starring a consenting patient, the video demonstrated safe methods and how to evaluate patient mobility.

"It was thought provoking for all staff and it assisted therapists and nurses to view patients consistently," Quiring said, noting that staff developed all educational tools and took responsibility for deploying these materials to their peers.

"They have done an excellent job of bringing employees together to ensure quality care; not just one or two but the entire staff," Musgrave said.

Quality improvement efforts continue at their facility. “The emphasis on outcomes has become a guiding management principle for our organization,” Quiring said. “We have a bulletin board where our outcomes are posted for all staff to view. We do a ‘happy dance’ when we see the results of our efforts.”

The 2005 Primaris Home Health Quality Award was presented to Saint Luke's Home Care Services at the Missouri Alliance for Home Care Annual Conference & Exhibition in Lake Ozark on Wednesday, April 26.