

THE Value Initiative

Members in Action: Redesigning the Delivery System

Hartford HealthCare – Connecticut

Logistics Center Coordinates Care Among Six Hospitals

The AHA's Members in Action series highlights how hospitals and health systems are implementing new value-based strategies to improve health care affordability. This includes work to redesign the delivery system, manage risk and new payment models, improve quality and outcomes, and implement operational solutions.

Overview

In an effort to coordinate the best place within its system for patients to receive care, Hartford HealthCare (HHC) instituted a centralized logistics center to maximize patient flow among its flagship academic medical center in Hartford and its five other hospitals in Connecticut.

Mimicking an air traffic control tower, a multidisciplinary team of 10 staff members relies on a myriad of computer monitors to identify which hospital in the system has the capacity and capabilities for a patient to receive care.

Located in an off-campus location, the logistics center team consists of critical care nurses, environmental services coordinators and patient transport staff who are able to see in real time the number of occupied and open beds, the number of patients in each emergency department (ED), the number of patients awaiting a transfer, and a live feed to Life Star helipads.

The system is designed to be seamless to patients. They have the final say on where they are transferred, though the community hospitals are often more convenient for them.

Impact

Since the logistics center launched in October 2017, HHC has:

- Decreased the time it takes to get patients to the next level of care they need;
- Increased the number of patients staying within the HHC system in fiscal year 2017 by 556, a 26% increase;
- Contributed to the organization's overall strategy for growth; and
- Alleviated capacity issues at the flagship medical center by utilizing beds at the community hospitals and decreasing patient transfer denials by 61%.

"All roads no longer lead to only Hartford Hospital," said Rocco Orlando, chief medical officer.

Because the team is in one location, it enables instant sharing of information among nursing, environmental services and patient transport departments.

"We no longer work in silos," said Beth Ciotti, vice president for care logistics. "We have conversations with each other in real time."

Over time, HHC intends to track the effect on patient satisfaction and clinical outcomes. The logistics center proved itself as a vital community asset when a nearby hospital was locked down as a result of a police event. HHC was able to take all the patients in that hospital's ED, using the logistics center to arrange transport to the most appropriate HHC facility.

All hospitals use the same electronic health record system. Previously, it would take multiple phone calls and texts, resulting in delays in obtaining up-to-date information on which hospital had open rooms, when transport staff were available to move a patient, and whether a room was ready for a new patient.

Lessons Learned

HHC officials offer the following suggestions for other health systems considering implementing a logistics center:

- Engage critical care nurses in assessing the level of care patients need;
- Build strong relationships among all locations, especially if some facilities are not accustomed to taking patient transfers other than from their own EDs;
- Appreciate that such a centralized, off-campus logistics center requires a culture shift and leadership adept at change management;
- Assess which practices need to be standardized among all sites related to nursing, patient transport and environmental services; and
- Hold weekly calls among key team members to discuss what is working and what needs improvement.

“This approach has definitely brought us closer together as a system,” said Ciotti. “We are much more innovative and agile.”



The centralized off-campus logistics center maximizes patient flow among all Hartford HealthCare hospitals.



By being in one location, staff from various departments are able to share information in real time.

Future Goals

In the future, HHC is exploring expanding the logistics center to include the system’s inpatient psychiatric facilities and broadening the capacity to outpatient services, including scheduling physician appointments, ordering radiology scans, and providing patients concierge services. The center also has the potential to improve patient safety by responding to the clinical status of patients in the hospital and at home as remote technologies become more prevalent.

“If our current process is Patient Transfer 1.0, we’re already planning 2.0,” said Orlando.

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