

THE Value Initiative

Members in Action: Redesign the Delivery System

Northern Maine Medical Center – Fort Kent, Maine

Purchase of Retail Pharmacy Enhances Services to the Community

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 May 2018, Northern Maine Medical Center (NMMC) purchased a local retail pharmacy in an effort to improve patient outcomes, support patients' medication adherence, reduce avoidable readmissions, and provide prevention and wellness services in a trusted community setting.

The privately owned retail pharmacy is located 20 miles away from the hospital's campus but within its service area, which comprises 15,000 people in the St. John Valley along the Canadian border. The addition of the pharmacy expands the continuum of care for patients outside the hospital's walls. The pharmacy also serves as a community resource center where hospital staff provide a variety of free services, including individual financial counseling, prevention and wellness education, immunizations and education on Medicare coverage options.

Lessons Learned

NMMC leaders said a key to their success was getting buy-in from an array of stakeholders, including board members and staff not only from pharmacy and nursing, but also from discharge planning, IT, human resources, billing, regulatory compliance and facilities management. They also sought technical assistance from experts in the retail pharmacy field.

Wanting to keep the



Northern Maine Medical Center purchased a nearby retail pharmacy to expand the continuum of care and serve as a community health prevention resource center.

Impact

Pharmacists at the retail pharmacy now have access to patients' medical information from the hospital and physicians' offices, including diagnoses, clinical progress notes, allergies, lists of current medications and lab results. This centralized source of medical and prescription information enables pharmacists to provide the most appropriate service, reducing the risk of duplicating or missing medications.

Pharmacy services are now integrated into discharge planning, helping to ensure that as patients leave the hospital, the retail pharmacy has the prescribed medications in stock. Equally important, hospital staff can assess in advance if patients can afford the medications and whether they have transportation to the pharmacy.

As the program rolls out, NMMC plans to track quality measures, such as medication reconciliation, readmission rates, changes in patient compliance and changes in patient health status.

continuity of services to existing customers, NMMC staff had the added challenge of assuming operations from the former owners while simultaneously keeping the doors of the retail pharmacy open. The transition included getting contracts signed with pharmacy benefit managers, converting staff to NMMC employees, ensuring compliance with Medicare and securing accreditation for durable medical equipment services.

“It was a learning experience and a growing experience for us,” said Alain Bois, chief operating officer.

Future Goals

A short-term priority is providing patients with the medications they need as they are being discharged from the hospital. Another goal is delivering medications in pre-packaged unit doses.

“By doing that, it makes things very easy for the family and patient to go home fully equipped to take care of themselves without having to make any stops along the way,” said Scott Richards, director of pharmacy. “That right there will provide improved outcomes, without a doubt.”

NMMC also plans to expand the prescription delivery service to employees at the hospital. In addition, they want to develop a program for patients in the medical center’s 45-bed long-term care hospital and rehabilitation facility. In addition, NMMC intends to enhance its medication therapy management program for high-risk patients, providing more individualized care to individuals with complex needs.

“We are learning every day,” said Bois. “It truly is an exciting time for us.”



Pharmacists at the retail location now have immediate access to comprehensive patient medical information.

Contact: Scott Richards, R.Ph., Director of Pharmacy

Telephone: (207) 834-1625

Email: Scott.richards@nmmc.org