Care coordination helps cut readmissions

Highland, outside agencies collaborate to serve patients after discharge

Health care reform requires hospitals and providers across the country to improve quality and reduce unnecessary health care costs. Highland has been answering the call, and making progress, in one of the biggest areas of opportunity: ensuring patients have a smooth transition from hospital to home.

Keeping patients safe across all platforms – from primary care offices, hospitals, home-health agencies – helps prevent disease, improves health and improves the patient experience.

Continued on page 2

Standardization increases hand-hygiene compliance

Protocols initiated, best practices shared, top performers recognized

Hand hygiene is paramount to protecting patient safety, and with the help of Infection Prevention the workforce at Highland Hospital has produced significant results in the past 12 months. Of the 11 care units observed, four surpassed the hospital target for compliance and the remaining seven are within percentage points of the mark.

“We did a lot of work to standardize our observations,” says Ann Marie Pettis, Director of IP. “We required an equal number of observations on each unit and additional educational methods such as real-time feedback and additional training recommended by the Joint Commission. Each month the unit or the discipline with the lowest score is asked to develop a plan for improvement.”

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Recent top performers in compliance

- Unit: ED/Obs, West 7 and West 6
- Job role: Physical therapists, physician assistants and environmental services
- New strategies have resulted in Highland raising its compliance rate more than 30 percent above the national average.

Health network builds partners, advances quality

If you missed Highland’s March 4 Town Hall meetings, you missed a great update on health care reform and what the Medical Center and all its affiliates, including Highland, are doing to prepare for it.

Chief of Medicine Robert McCann, M.D., led the discussion about the challenges ahead.
Employee feedback fuels progress

Many of the best ideas at Highland come directly from employees, as the action items from the 2011 employee engagement survey show. Two years ago, employees made important suggestions about how Highland could improve its workplace culture, and the hospital responded with dozens of improvements. Many of these are illustrated on the insert, opposite. Save the date: The employee survey is June 17-30.

Care Continued from front

Patient outcomes and reduces unnecessary hospital readmissions. Highland has reduced its readmission rate impressively (see inset box) with innovations such as pharmacy consultations for at-risk patients (Highlights, September 2012). Another program that’s getting results: the partnership between Highland’s care team and home care coordinators.

“What many people don’t know is the home care coordinators aren’t Highland employees, even though many have worked here for years,” says Director of Social Work Mike Sullivan. “These nurses work for outside agencies, and the hospital relies on them to help patients continue their care at home.”

Working inside the hospital gives these professionals close contact with the patients they serve, and the Highland providers, nurses and social workers providing inpatient care.

Employees from four agencies – Visiting Nurse Service of Rochester (VNS), Home Care of Rochester, Lifetime Care, and the Livingston County Health Department – help anticipate patients’ post-hospital needs, such as physical therapy, oxygen therapy and IV antibiotics.

“We ensure those resources are in place,” says Liz Guck, RN, of VNS. “Plus, we are knowledgeable about insurance and what support systems people have at their homes.”

Good communication and teamwork are essential. Care Coordinator Judy Calamia, RN, and Senior Social Worker Beth Ragsdale, LMSW, describe their interactions with home care coordinators as “running dialogues.”

One such dialogue led to an ingenious solution: a soon-to-be-discharged patient was having difficulty and pain with wound dressing changes.

A home care coordinator who had experience with complex dressing worked with Highland’s care team to help: They showed the patient how to soak the dressings in pain medication before applying them. A simple fix, but with potentially huge benefit to the patient because proper wound care helps prevent potential readmission.

“We’re always keeping one another in the loop,” says Judy. “We start the conversations upon admissions and carry them through to discharge.”

Says Beth, “In between we’re using assessments, shared notes and observations. What we’ve found is the earlier we all get together, the easier the transition home.”

Collaboration key to lower readmission rates

- Recent data show Highland with a 9.4 percent Medical-Surgical 30-day readmission rate. The UHC compare group is at 12.3 percent.
- As a part of the nationwide collaborative Partnership For Patients, Highland is focused on lowering preventable readmissions by 20 percent by the end of 2013.

I CARE Spotlight: RESPECT

Radiologic technologist Tammy Douglass-Stirpe says that patients who come to Medical Imaging always have some trepidation.

“There is the unknown from the patient’s perspective, and that can cause fear,” says Tammy, who has been at Highland for 11 years. “Also, people have to give up their clothing to do the tests, so there is a loss of privacy. I’ve always kept that in mind when dealing with patients.”

Tammy says her goal is to treat everyone as an individual whose privacy and dignity matter.

“It’s simple things like closing a door when I leave the patient in a room or making sure that when they are maneuvering on the table that I help them keep covered,” Tammy says. “It helps patients gain a little control in a situation beyond their control.”

Tammy also helps Highland’s diverse patient population by using the translation service regularly. “Helping the patient understand what we’re doing is a comfort to them and us,” she says.

Respect, according to Tammy, starts at the top and she says Chief of Medical Imaging Ray Tan, M.D., and all the department managers demonstrate that daily by the respect they show the staff and patients.

“I’m honored to do what I do here, and it’s hard for that enthusiasm and love I have for my job not to translate to a good patient experience,” says Tammy.
Environmental Services makes it a clean sweep

Department posts highest HCAHPS among city hospitals

There is a sign right inside the Environmental Services door at Highland Hospital that reads “Our Cleaning Helps Your Healing.” That’s a phrase that each Environmental Services (ES) staff member is dedicated to and it shows in their work every day. In fact, Highland’s ES Department has earned the highest HCAHPS in Rochester for overall hospital cleanliness. That’s an achievement that involves the entire team.

It Starts with Communication

It’s a challenge to make sure that 85 full-time and part-time employees who work all shifts in the hospital are kept up to date with information, innovation and training. ES begins each shift with a daily huddle to make sure staff are fully informed and engaged. “It’s a good team-building exercise and a place where we share information with the staff,” says ES Department Manager Franklin Allen. Housekeeper Manager Teddy Smalls appreciates the huddles. “We find out what is going on and what we can do better.”

Department members work together and help each other. “If someone is finished with their work, they will help someone else with theirs,” says housekeeper Quanita Ambrester. Recently ES made a change that resulted in a better work load balance for staff. Previously, two staff members were assigned to each floor and had responsibilities for either the West or East wings. But a cul de sac area has been carved out in the middle of several floors, and those areas are now being cleaned by another staff member.

This spring the department is launching a new tool called a Communication Log that will be placed at each nursing station. The log will enable nursing and environmental services personnel on all shifts to communicate in writing with each other to provide updates, share concerns and give recognition. The log program will be expanded to other departments, as well.

Commitment to Cleanliness

The department is committed to best practices for cleaning. “We research current products and tools and find out what will work best in our hospital,” says Horace Little, who supervises day staff and has responsibilities for ordering supplies and monitoring equipment.

Environmental Service staff members are proud of their part in the healing process.

Working together with other hospitals has also paid off. Highland is part of a four-hospital collaborative with Strong Memorial, Unity and Rochester General to determine the best methods to abate C. diff. The hospitals have introduced a double-clean process that involves staff members doing a discharge clean of each room, waiting a short period (called dwell time) and then wiping everything down again. This has helped minimize incidents of C. diff city-wide.
Increased recognition included visits by senior leadership and IP staff. They brought cookie trays to recognize the outstanding efforts by high performers in keeping patients and colleagues safe by stopping the spread of infection.

Nurse Kaitlyn Truelove from Ed/Obs says one of their best practices was quite obvious, and effective.

“We have this large desk as the focal point in the unit so we lined it with hand sanitizer,” Kaitlyn says.

“We’re also not shy about telling colleagues when they missed an opportunity to use proper hand hygiene.”

**MAKING THE ROUNDS**

- Retired Strong Health Geriatrics Medical Director Rocco Vivenzio, M.D., C.M.D., is the recipient of the 2013 Medical Director of the Year Award from the AMDA. Dr. Vivenzio’s leadership, vision and innovation helped develop a network of providers, long-term care and assisted-living facilities that improved care in the Rochester area for the past 30 years.

- **Pride Week (June 10-14):** Submit entries for the Quality and Safety poster contest to HR by April 15. To create poster, click Highland Templates on left-hand side of Highland Intranet homepage; select “HH Posier 2” template.

**Network** Continued from front

Our nation’s health care delivery system must change to address an unsustainable rise in health care costs. Health-care reform attempts to “bend the cost curve” downward by giving health care organizations incentives to deliver high-quality care that is also cost-effective.

Today, everyone is paid on a fee-for-service basis, the more services performed, the more reimbursements providers and hospitals receive. Health care reform gives providers incentives to keep people healthy, reducing the amount of tests, procedures and hospitalizations they’ll need. Reform requires providers in different settings to partner and co-manage cases. This means we’ll see more communication and collaboration between hospitals, nursing homes, primary care practices and agencies so patients get the right level of care at the right time.

To meet the challenge, URMC, Highland and community physicians have formed an “accountable care network” to improve efficiency across all the different platforms of care. Accountable Health Partners (AHP) is the name of the network.

AHP will unite community and faculty physicians, hospitals, and other affiliated providers as true partners in a for-profit care model. While the changes still to come are significant, a lot of good work is under way. In February 2012, all 22 URMC and Highland primary care sites earned national certification as Patient Centered Medical Homes to deliver proactive patient care.

Similarly, Highland has been focusing on reducing preventable readmissions. This issue shows how timely interventions by our staff – in partnership with home-health nurses – give patients a safer transition to home.

We’ll keep you updated on AHP’s progress in future communications, including a special edition of Highlights on health care reform. To view Dr. McCann’s talk, go to the Highland Intranet.

**HCAHPS – Q4 ’12**

HCAHPS is focused on providing the best experience for patients and families. HCAHPS patient surveys scores impact our reimbursement. (Scores are percentages)

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<td>Response of Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comm. on Meds</td>
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Note: Percentages based on people who answered ‘Always’
**Employee Ideas Make Good Things Happen at Highland**

Your opinions matter! Employee feedback on the 2011 employee engagement survey led to many improvements, shown here. Our next survey is June 17-30; please be sure to participate.

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<tr>
<th>EMPLOYEES REQUESTED</th>
<th>HIGHLAND RESPONDED</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Information</em> about pay and benefits</td>
<td>• Monthly “For Your Benefit” newsletters</td>
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<td>• e-pay stubs with e-mail alert options you customize</td>
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<th>New career opportunities</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tech U: Paid on-the-job training enables current employees to become PCTs</td>
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<td>• Career ladder program has created an additional 35 promotion opportunities in six departments</td>
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<td>• 25% of all new job opportunities at Highland are filled by our current employees</td>
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Some of the Highland staff members promoted through expanded career programs and their new roles: top, Adrian Garcia, PCT; bottom left, Isatu Jallow, ES Trainer/Aide; bottom right, Nadine Murray, Transporter 3A Preceptor.
**Wellness resources and health benefits**

- Free annual biometric screenings help you safeguard your health
- Weight Watchers at Work for healthy weight management
- Art Takes Flight stairwell, walking trails for easy fitness options
- Grand Grounds coffee house with additional beverage, food options

**Tools & Resources to deliver safe, error-free care**

- Investments in facility, technology:
  - Two Operating Rooms built + second da Vinci system as Highland’s surgical services expand
  - New equipment in OR, Sterile Processing Department help staff meet growing caseload
  - Periop instrument tracking system for improved efficiency, case cart accuracy
  - eRecord for inpatient, ambulatory sites means one patient record, more efficient care across sites. New eRecord work lists improve nurses’ work efficiency and support safe patient hand-offs.
- Facility upgrades:
  - Perioperative area
  - East 7
  - Level 1 refurbishment
  - GAMA, Cardiology expansion

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**Save the Date:** Our next employee engagement survey is June 17-30.