

Reducing Readmissions in Florida

Reducing hospital readmissions to improve the quality of care and reduce health care costs is an integral element of virtually every health reform proposal. While the national debate about reform continues, providers, plans, and states are already taking steps to reduce readmissions through a variety of innovative initiatives. In Florida, for example, there is a statewide initiative bringing stakeholders together to reduce readmissions through an approach that combines both public reporting and a collaborative focused on improvement.

About a year ago, Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) updated its consumer website (www.floridahealthfinder.gov) to include comparisons of potentially preventable readmission (PPR) rates for all hospitals in the state. Using the 3M™ PPR methodology, the website shows readmission rates for patients 18 and older who were readmitted to the hospital within 15 days. The rates are shown by hospital as well as by condition/procedure, with a notation of whether the readmission rate is "as expected," "higher than expected," or "lower than expected."

Working with AHCA and the Florida Hospital Association (FHA), Treo Solutions and our partner 3M have been supporting this effort through ongoing data analysis. Treo works with AHCA to develop the analysis for public reporting and generates reports for review by the hospitals prior to the rates being placed on the website. It's important to note that a core component of the Florida readmissions initiative is the transparency of information; the same information is shared between the state agency, the hospitals, and the public.

Recognizing the opportunity to further examine readmissions rates and the potential for reducing the number of readmissions for potentially preventable conditions, AHCA and FHA developed a Collaborative on Reducing Readmission Rates. This initiative is designed to better understand the reasons for patients being readmitted, identify those initiatives that reduce the likelihood of a readmission, share best practices, and identify policy issues that impact readmissions.

Readmissions in Florida: One Year Later

Recently, AHCA updated the readmission rates on the FloridaHealthFinder website. Now, after a year of experience and with two years of data, the Collaborative is conducting an in-depth examination of the statewide data and providing hospitals with their own PPR data to identify any patterns or trends that require additional review.

As part of its charge, the Collaborative has established statewide targets for readmissions for patients with heart failure, heart attack, pneumonia, CABGs, and hip joint replacement. For each of these conditions, as well as others, the Collaborative is using Treo-produced reports on:

- Patients being readmitted by payer
- The percentage of patients being readmitted to another hospital
- The number of times patients are readmitted within the 15 day period
- Readmission rates based on where the patient was originally discharged
- Charges associated with the readmission
- Reasons for readmission

For example, for heart failure patients, the Treo reports show:

- The statewide readmission rate was 13.3% with 6,605 patients being readmitted within 15 days - an increase from the previous year's 12.6% readmission rate.
- The readmission rate for patients with a mental health issue was 17.4%, compared to 13.1% for those without an issue.
- One in five of the patients were readmitted to another facility.
- The Medicare readmission rate was 13.7% and represented 82% of all readmissions for congestive heart failure.
- Readmission rates were highest for those patients originally discharged to a skilled nursing facility (17.3%) but the largest number of patients readmitted (4,739 or 72%) were readmitted from home either with or without home care.
- Heart failure was the primary diagnosis for the readmission (42% of the cases), followed by renal failure, pulmonary edema & respiratory failure, COPD, and septicemia.

The same details are being provided on a facility-specific level to hospitals in the Collaborative so that they can compare their hospitals' results with the statewide data, further investigate potential issues and opportunities for improvement, and set measurable targets for reducing readmissions at their facilities. Hospitals are being encouraged to use this data to help them determine the number of patients that would be affected if readmission rates reached target goals; identify the location to which patients were originally discharged, determine why they were readmitted, and actions that could have been taken to prevent readmission; and examine the most common diagnoses for patients who were readmitted.

The Florida experience is just one of a number of initiatives to reduce potentially preventable readmissions that is being supported by Treo Solutions. To learn more about PPRs and the services provided by Treo Solutions, call Bryan Ness at (800) 455-7338.