COXHEALTH CASE STUDY

DNV GL - HEALTHCARE AND THE COXHEALTH PARTNERSHIP: ACCREDITATION AND ISO 9001 ALIGNS WITH ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY AND HELPS REDUCE PATIENT READMISSIONS
CoxHealth is a five-hospital system in Southwest Missouri. It has a total of 992 beds with more than 237,000 ED/Urgent Care visits per year and serves a primarily rural population.

The Issue

Readmission of patients within 30 days of discharge is one of the most serious issues plaguing healthcare delivery in the United States. No one wants to go to the hospital, let alone return shortly after being discharged; readmissions also hurt hospital bottom lines. Readmissions cost hospitals $41.3 billion during the first 11 months of 2011, according to data from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

As part of the Affordable Care Act, in 2012 the Medicare program began withholding small proportions of payments to hospitals if patient readmissions occurred due to certain medical conditions (pneumonia and congestive heart failure among them). Such initiatives are known as value-based payments.
Another initiative undertaken was paying closer attention to patients as they were being discharged. A team was assembled to contact patients immediately after being discharged to closely coordinate their care, including the use of home healthcare services.

CoxHealth paid particular attention to patients who had five or more hospital admissions through the emergency room, a cohort that tends to have a significantly higher readmission rate than average. It was determined that many of these patients were seeking care through the ER due to dental pain, mental health, and social issues. These patients were not receiving the right outpatient care to meet their ongoing healthcare needs. CoxHealth embarked on a patient centered process approach to deliver the right care in the right place by harnessing community partners and services. Interventions implemented included:

- Assignment of a primary care provider with a follow-up appointment within 7 days
- Follow-up discharge phone calls to ensure a smooth transition to the next provider of care
- Collaboration with a Federally Qualified Mental Health Center to discharge medically stable detox patients. In addition, established protocols to expedite subacute care for behavioral disorders not acute enough for inpatient admission, but more aggressive than an outpatient center
- Collaboration with a Federally Qualified Health Center to discharge patients from the ED and sent directly to an on-campus medical home clinic that provides both primary care and mental health care
- Developed protocols with the Federally Qualified Health Center to transition a patient from the ED for immediate dental care
- Provide transportation from the ED to the outpatient service
- Embedded social workers in the ED to assist with arranging a variety of community services to meet patient needs
- Established a Community Health Advanced Practice Paramedic Program (CHAPP) to conduct frequent home visits by specially trained paramedics to address the medical, behavioral, and social needs of the patient

What Changed

DNV GL Healthcare is the second largest hospital accrediting body in the United States. It currently accredits 500 hospitals in 49 states. It has adopted ISO 9001, a quality management system that originated in Europe, for hospitals to improve operational processes and the quality of care.

CoxHealth had been using the Joint Commission for many years, until it transitioned to DNV GL as its accrediting body in March 2015. Although the system had been planning a readmission reduction program before contracting with DNV GL, its presence as the new accreditor helped put the process in motion.

“The DNV GL accreditation process and ISO 9001 aligns with our strategy to integrate value based payments and population health. Our partnership and implementation of an ISO 9001 Quality Management System process approach has created synergy and progression toward our goals,” said Arlo Stallion, CoxHealth’s System Director of Regulatory Affairs and Medical Staff Services.
The Results

As a result, there was a 16 percent decrease in the total ED visits of the inclusive population. Returns to the ED within 72 hours decreased by 20 percent. More than 10,000 care hours opened up in the ED, which allowed increased access for 3,400 acute emergent patients. CHAPP enrollee ED visits decreased by 97 percent during the 12 week enrollment. There was also an 89 percent decrease in the number of ambulance transports to the hospital during program enrollment. This increased ambulance availability for 119 emergent responses.

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Stallion noted the DNV GL partnership and ISO 9001 process approach supports and creates greater synergy to undertake these initiatives.

“The NIAHO accreditation and ISO 9001 process approach helps us be more efficient and effective in the use of our resources,” she said, adding that the collaborative patient centered approach to accreditation “promotes and fosters better communication and effective process redesign.”

Arlo Stallion, CoxHealth’s System Director of Regulatory Affairs and Medical Staff Services

Moreover, the use of the ISO 9001 standard is aligning key processes and enabling further integration and standardization across CoxHealth,” Stallion said.

At CoxHealth’s Medical Center South in Springfield, Mo., the 30-day readmission rate before contracting with DNV GL was approaching 11 percent. During fiscal 2017, the rate had dropped to 9.32 percent, an overall reduction of about 15 percent. Medical Center South’s readmission rate of patients over rolling 12 month periods also dropped from 9.95 percent to 9.51 percent. The hospital is significantly below the statewide average for patients with congestive heart failure (10.8 percent versus 19 percent).

Stallion observed that the presence of DNV GL has helped it change the way it addresses clinical issues.

“It is changing our attitude and approach to continual improvement,” she said.

Arlo Stallion, CoxHealth’s System Director of Regulatory Affairs and Medical Staff Services

+10,000

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+119

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DNV GL

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Within healthcare, we help our customers achieve excellence by improving quality and patient safety through hospital accreditation, managing infection risk, management system certification and training.

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