Joint Commission Resources

Spotlight on Success

MultiCare Health System

Easy-to-use tracers become a powerful performance improvement tool

New leadership brought an intense perspective on quality and patient safety to this five-hospital system. Executives redefined how quality was embedded within the MultiCare culture, with a focus on continuous readiness for Joint Commission accreditation as well as CMS and state surveys. Quality directives were recently spurred, in part, by news of a local medical center that failed its Joint Commission survey and was operating on a contingent status.

Opportunity

The MultiCare quality team aimed to modernize the use of tracers, moving the technique from an infrequent paper-based exercise to an automated and user friendly tool embraced by staff. After evaluating several software products, the team chose Tracers with AMP® from Joint Commission Resources (JCR) because of the product's direct link with Joint Commission standards and its affordability.

Solutions

The first step was to ensure that clinicians understood the software and were comfortable using it. Two product champions from Quality Management at MultiCare — the Director, Patient Safety & Accreditation, and the Policies System Analyst — applied an educator's lens to the software's functionality and incorporated a clinician's perspective into training materials for improved understanding.

Overview

– Not-for-profit five-hospital system located in Washington

– 15,000+ team members, including employees, providers, and volunteers

– Honored as one of the nation's *Most Wired* health care organizations seven years in a row

Outcomes

– High staff engagement as users become enthused about using tracers

– Data-rich reports inform weekly huddles and other performance improvement activities

– Supports the system's quality agenda and accreditation readiness

Key leaders — from the chief nursing executives to infection preventionists, clinical department leaders and stroke coordinators — were shown how to use and optimize the tracer tool. MultiCare uses JCR's library of close to 5,000 sample questions linked to Standards and Elements of Performance and then builds its own templates and questions to fit a custom need. The Policies System Analyst advises, "Start small with a pilot and show users how easy the product is to use." She explained how a pilot with the operating room (OR) staff at one hospital began. Before Tracers with AMP, individuals were tracking questions by paper, but were frustrated that they did not have the time to organize or analyze results. The Policies System Analyst proposed that they use the JCR software to conduct a focused tracer and leaders opted to begin with surgical timeouts; they kept it simple (just a few questions) and were pleased with the results. Now they are moving on to other focused tracers and OR teams across the system are getting involved.

All tracer resources are included on the system's intranet for easy access. Users can quickly log on to their hospital's site and begin using the software; no passwords are required to streamline the process. MultiCare users like the "guest access" feature that allows multiple individuals to enter tracer data remotely.

Weekly huddles for patient harm, staff harm, and accreditation readiness are conducted at the hospital and system level. Tracer data is used during huddles to spotlight care breakdowns (e.g. falls). Timely at-a-glance reports are available

Outcomes

MORE TRACERS, USED DIVERSELY

From a rarely used technique, tracers are now emerging as a powerful tool at MultiCare. Today approximately 50 tracers are conducted per month to deliver the robust data needed to gauge performance among adult, pediatric, and neonatal patients. Infection preventionists are heavy users for areas such as hand hygiene, central line-associated bloodstream infections, and catheter-associated urinary tract infections. Specialty tracers (e.g. dialysis) are an important part of the mix as well.

CONTINUOUS READINESS

Timely tracer reports have strengthened the system's ability to compare departments and sites, respond to gaps, and improve compliance.

TESTIMONIAL

Director, Patient Safety & Accreditation, Quality Management, MultiCare Health System

"This tracer tool, along with the support of our senior leadership, helps everyone to improve and shift the conversation from "That's Quality's job!" to "That's my job!" Together we keep the next patient safe and are ready for the next patient and not just the next survey."

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