

Burning Clinical Question

Is there a correlation between the readmission rate of Heart Failure (HF) patients and pre-scheduled follow up appointments with a primary care physician?

Background/Triggers

- Heart Failure is one of three initiatives being reviewed for the Readmission Reduction Program by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid.
- There is limited data to link HF readmissions and scheduling post discharge follow up appointments with primary care physicians prior to hospital discharge.

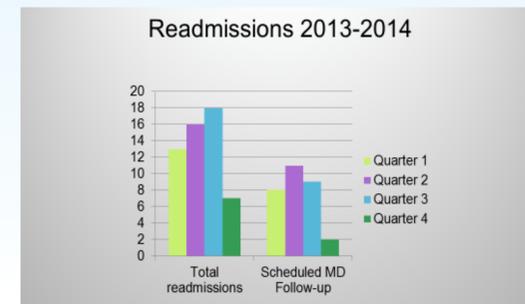
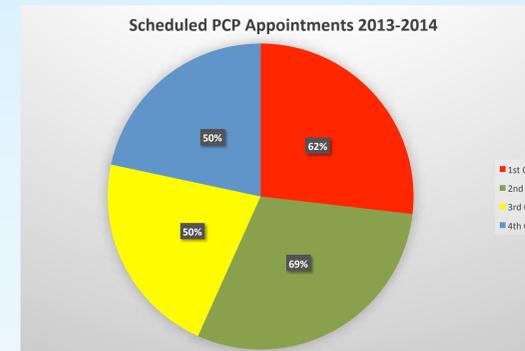
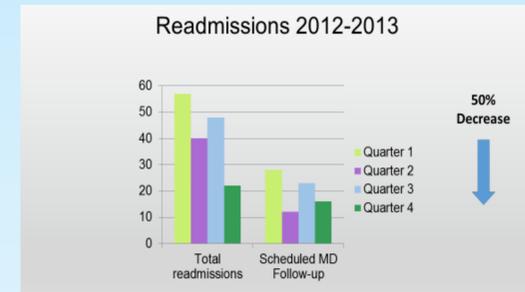
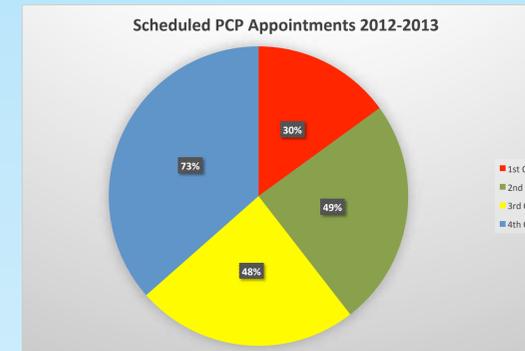
Practice Change

- Nursing Unit Secretaries set up the patient's follow up appointments with their primary care physician.
- If a patient does not have a primary care physician, they are referred to the Heart Impact Clinic, a part of the Advanced HF Clinic. They are followed until established with a primary care physician.
- Nursing Unit Secretaries collaborate with patients for a convenient time to schedule follow up appointments and identify barriers associated with meeting these appointments.

Method

- Chart review of 52 high risk heart failure patients (with 2 or more readmissions in six months).
- Charts reviewed for dates of admission, length of stay and discharge summaries.
- If available, charts were reviewed post discharge for follow up visits with the primary care physician in order to determine compliance.
- The study piloted the scheduling of the primary care physician's appointments prior to discharge during the last quarter of the 12 month period.

Results



Evaluation

- The evidence supports that an improvement in the readmission rate of HF patients coincides with an improvement in the rate of scheduled primary care follow up during the transition from hospital to home.

Nursing Implications

- A decrease in the number of follow up appointments was directly related to a decrease in available Nursing Unit Secretary hours on the unit.
- Secretary hours were adjusted to include more day and evening shift hours.
- This process is implemented on the unit.
- Nursing Unit Secretaries make follow up appointments as soon as the patient has discharge orders.

References

- Abrams, M., R., Mika, S. & Lawtor, G.(2011). Realizing Health Reform's Potential. How the Affordable Care Act will strengthen primary care and benefit patients, providers and payers. The Commonwealth Fund, Pub.1466, Vol.1, January 2011.
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service. (2013, August 2). Readmission Reduction Program. Retrieved from <http://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-payment/ AcuteInpatientPPS/Readmissions-Reduction-Program.html>