Trinity leading the way in nursing home collaboration
Council brings together hospital, nursing homes to improve quality

Being admitted to the hospital can be rough. Monitors beep, caregivers rush in and out, the surroundings are sterile and unfamiliar. We would rather be treated – if at all possible – in the comfort of our own beds.

By working with area nursing homes, otherwise known as skilled nursing facilities, Trinity has helped to keep patients home. Because Trinity believes that rehabilitation is the best approach toward improving outcomes, when patients leave the hospital, it partnered with a care group in January 2013 to form the Trinity Skilled Nursing Facility Community Council.

Together Trinity – the first health system in the area – and six facilities have embarked on a journey toward improving care delivery beyond hospital visits.

“Coordinating care between the hospital and SNFs is multi-faceted,” said Stephen Demarest, Trinity’s Manager of Physician Relations. “Our goal is to keep these folks well and focus on quality of care delivered outside the hospital.”

The goal of the council is to provide better care for patients transitioning from the hospital into SNFs. By partnering with SNFs to provide patients with the care they need in the facilities, it helps reduce unnecessary hospital readmissions.

Coordinating care

Trinity is playing another big role in this collaboration by deploying nurse practitioners into SNFs.

Through a pilot partnership with Rock Island Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Trinity recently placed a nurse practitioner at the facility five days a week. Joy Ehern, MS, BSN, visits patients in their rooms to diagnose and treat problems ranging from ventilator issues to wounds that won’t heal.

Together with medical director Dr. Paul Wang, Ehern has developed a care plan for patients atRNK that may require additional criteria.

“Our surgical processes are designed to reduce cost and improve the best outcome every time,” said Jean Doerge, Trinity’s Vice President of Surgery. “Having this seal of approval gives validation to the guidelines we’ve already put in place to achieve the highest quality results.”

Through collaboration with orthopedic surgeons on both the Iowa and Illinois campuses, Trinity and its surgery team have seen outstanding outcomes for patients. Data is used to closely monitor outcomes with constant feedback improving patient’s experience.

Research has shown patients who are well educated about their conditions and what is expected of them before and after surgery are more likely to have better outcomes than patients who are not as knowledgeable. So Trinity encourages all candidates for total joint replacement to attend pre-surgery “boot camp.”

“Achieving the best outcomes. If patients start long before surgery, it involves the patient, their family, and primary care – all working in unison to reduce risk factors, making sure patients understand how to care for themselves and how to expect what to expect during recovery.” Director of Surgical Services Becky Demarest says.

Coordinating care with physicians and keeping the patient involved means outstanding outcomes for our patients, including faster recovery, less pain, reduced infections, fewer blood transfusions and a better patient experience.

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“Many of our patients come directly from the ICU to us,” Ehern says. “Without onsite immediate access to facilities, we end up back in the hospital because of complications or changing conditions. They are pretty sick folks.”

Program begun at Trinity Muscatine

Trinity Muscatine provided the model for the Rock Island program. There, Trinity primary care physicians partnered with a physician assistant to care for patients in Muscatine’s skilled nursing facilities. Like the Rock Island program, patients in Muscatine SNFs could be treated immediately at the bedside when experiencing sudden changes in condition that would, at one time, have resulted in a trip to the hospital.

Hospital readmission rates from SNFs in Muscatine have declined dramatically since the program was established nine years ago. The Muscatine facilities have seen lower cost readmissions that fall far below the national average of 23.1 percent.

“Our goal is to keep them from returning to the hospital. They are much happier and more comfortable here.”

“Trinity has pioneered a great approach to patient care. Really, they are leading the way. I am thrilled to be working with them.”

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