

Quality Counts

Arizona Home Health Quality Initiative

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Strategies Help Improve Physician Relationships and Decrease ACH

The “Steps to Success” listed below have been implemented by a home health agency in Florida that has improved its physician relationships in an effort to reduce acute care hospitalization (ACH) rates.

Protocols

- Create specific protocols for a select group of physicians—demonstrate to physicians how these protocols can reduce phone calls to their office, as well as calls to them during the night.
- Assign staff to the physician group.
- Educate staff and involve the physician office staff in the educational sessions.

Weekends

- Assign consistent and competent weekend manager and staff.
- Make sure weekend manager is on call after hours for the entire weekend.
- Involve weekend manager in staff education.

After Hours

- Assign a triage nurse.
- Make sure the nurse has all necessary equipment (beepers, fax, etc.)

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Save the Date:

**HSAG’s Home Health
“Keys For Success”
Learning Session
August 24 at HSAG!**

**Contact Colleen Angotti at
602.745.6295 or [cangotti@azqio.
sdps.org](mailto:cangotti@azqio.sdps.org) for agenda and
registration information.**

CMS proposes payment changes for Medicare home health services and certain medical equipment

A 3.1 percent increase in Medicare payment rates to home health agencies for calendar year 2007 was announced by CMS recently. For more information on how this will affect you, please visit [http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/
media/press/release.asp?Counter=1917](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/media/press/release.asp?Counter=1917).

- Make sure the nurse has the PM shift schedule and the schedule for the following day.

Physician Relationship

- Develop trust by being honest and dependable.
- Make sure all patient assessments are thorough.
- Have staff available to meet physician needs.

If you have questions on how to implement these strategies, please contact Caralyn Williams, MAOM, HSAG Quality Improvement Specialist, at 602.745.6284 or at cwilliams@azqio.sdps.org.

Source: Sandy Courtoy, RN, Home Health Service, Venice Florida

Best Practices for Reducing ACH:

Using these can make a difference!

Many of HSAG's identified participants are already using the best practices listed below to help lower their rates of acute care hospitalization (ACH). Take some time to discuss with your staff which best practices your agency has used, and what successes and barriers you have encountered. Brainstorm how we can all support each other and be successful as a community.

1. Risk Assessment Tool—have a process to back it up. What do you do differently if someone comes up high risk?
2. Emergency Care Plan for patients and caregivers—implement within the first several visits.

NPI: Get It. Share It. Use It.

Providers can apply online for their National Provider Identifier (NPI) free of charge by visiting <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov> or by calling 1.800.465.3203 and requesting a paper application.

For more information and free resources on the NPI Initiative, please visit <http://cms.hhs.gov/NationalProviderStand>.

3. Front load visits—this depends on risk, need, and availability of staff.
4. Phone monitoring—incorporate scheduled, pre-planned phone calls from the clinician to the patient/caregivers on days between visits.
5. Patient self-management—encourage staff to work on patient self-management rather than just education.

HSAG is here to help; please feel free to contact Caralyn Williams, MAOM, HSAG Quality Improvement Specialist, at 602.745.6284 or at cwilliams@azqio.sdps.org if you need assistance in implementing any of these best practices.

Source: Qualis Health, 2006

Improving Oral Medication Outcomes

Strategies for Change on MedQIC and how HSAG can help

Improvement in the oral medications outcome measure is determined by an increase in the percentage of patients who improve their ability to take their medications correctly. As the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization in Arizona, HSAG is committed to help agencies achieve higher percentages and improve their oral medication outcomes. Agencies can find valuable information and Strategies for Change on MedQIC by visiting <http://www.medqic.org/dcs/ContentServer?cid=1100298560565&pagename=Medqic%2FContent%2FParentShellTemplate&parentName=Topic&c=MQParents>. These Strategies for Change will help agencies:

Measure and Report Performance

- Use the Outcome-Based Quality Improvement (OBQI) model to guide and measure progress. OBQI is a systematic approach agencies can implement and follow in order to continuously improve the quality of care they provide. Here, process quality is measured against patient outcomes as a means to enhance organizational quality and effectiveness. HSAG has posted OBQI training

materials and resources on its Home Health Quality Initiative Web site. Visit http://hhqi.hsag.com/obqi_materials.asp to view and download these helpful materials.

Redesign Processes

- Standardize processes to improve care and consistency. This will ensure that each patient receives the best care possible. When providers perform similar tasks in different ways or in a different order, the risks of mistakes and omissions are higher. Examine key care processes to determine variability and then find ways to standardize (HSAG can help!)
- Become involved in collaboratives that promote improvement. HSAG-sponsored collaboratives employ a systematic approach and bring together various resources and organizations to make major, rapid changes to produce breakthrough results, lower costs, and better health outcomes. Work with HSAG to learn about practice innovations and share experiences to accelerate learning and widespread implementation of best practices.

The Impact of Front Loading Visits on Patient Rehospitalization

Presentation and resources now posted on MedQIC

The Impact of Front-Loading Visits on Patient Rehospitalization presentation reviews the results of an agency case study on rehospitalization rates for high-risk patients. The study focuses on heart failure and diabetes patients. Included in the presentation are carepath guidelines, telehealth schedules, and agency-specific visit patterns.

Visit <http://www.medqic.org/dcs/ContentServer?cid=1142280316372&pagename=Medqic%2FMQPresentations%2FPresentationTemplate&c=MQPresentations>, to download these helpful resources to aid in your efforts to standardize care using clinical guidelines and best practices.

This presentation was done in conjunction with the Ohio Council for Home Care/Center for Community Based Care, University Hospitals Home Care Services/University Hospital Health System, and Case Western Reserve University.

Remember, you are community resources too! (Register for HSAG's "Keys For Success Learning Session Collaborative on August 24—see box on page 1).

Transform Organizational Culture

- Commit to establishing patients as the center of care. The traditional medical view is based on the assumption that patients should and will comply with provider recommendations of care. This approach may be useful when the patient is unable to make informed decisions, but it does not necessarily incorporate the patient, and therefore, may not promote patient adherence to a plan of care. For patients with the ability to make informed decisions, the "empowerment" approach is an option. This approach integrates the patient's personal beliefs with best and evidence-based practices to move the care from the provider to the patient. This approach enhances the provider-patient relationship and allows for—and incorporates—psychosocial differences that affect the desire or ability to follow a plan of care.

If you have questions about implementing any of the strategies posted on MedQIC, please contact Carolyn Williams, MAOM, HSAG Quality Improvement Specialist, at 602.745.6284 or at cewilliams@azqio.sdps.org.

Quality Medication Administration Project

Q-MAP national collaborative materials now available on MedQIC

Q-MAP is a national collaborative aimed at encouraging multi-state home health agency collaboration with Medicare Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) to utilize basic QI processes and support transformational change in medication management. For agencies focusing on the improvement of oral medications outcome measure, Q-MAP resources are invaluable. Q-MAP learning session materials and resources are posted on MedQIC and available for you to download and use in your agencies! As Arizona's QIO, HSAG is available to assist agencies with their improvement

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in oral medication quality measure using Q-MAP strategies. Q-MAP can help agencies recognize the impact of OASIS on outcomes, develop best practices to improve MO780, develop a plan of improvement, include rehab services in medication management, and much more.

Visit <http://www.medqic.org/dcs/ContentServer?cid=1100298560565&pagename=Medqic%2FListingPages%2FMainListingTemplate&parentName=Topic&level3=Presentations&resetSessionForTopic=Yes&c=MQParents> to download and view materials, or contact Caralyn Williams, MAOM, HSAG Quality Improvement Specialist, at 602.745.6284 or at cwilliams@azqio.sdps.org if you have questions.

CMS Open Door Forum
August 15 at 11 a.m.
Visit http://www.cms.hhs.gov/OpenDoorForums/17_ODF_HHHDME.asp for more information.

Become a Home Health STAR

Set targets—achieve results! Register today.

Registration is free and available to all Medicare- and/or Medicaid-certified home health agencies. To register for the HH STAR Web site, please contact Colleen Angotti at 602.745.6295 to get your initial password, then go to <http://www.hhqi-star.org> and create an account. Once your account is created, you can access your data.

August is Immunization Awareness Month
Don't get left out in the cold—get ready for the 2006-2007 flu season!
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu>
Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS)
<http://www.azdhs.gov/flu>
HSAG Immunization Web site
<http://www.hsag.com/projects/immunization.asp>
Arizona Community Information and Referral (CIR)
<http://www.cir.org/seasonal-flu.html>

HSAG Home Health Team Contact Information		
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Colleen Angotti Administrative Assistant II cangotti@azqio.sdps.org 602.745.6295	Dawn Williams, BS Communications Project Manager dwilliams@azqio.sdps.org 602.745.6316	Home Health Quality Improvement Web Site http://hhqi.hsag.com

This material was prepared by Health Services Advisory Group, Inc. (HSAG), the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for Arizona, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents presented do not necessarily reflect CMS policy.