

Post Acute Care: Following the Patient

The Problem: Hospital risk losing millions of dollars due to new Medicare rules related to Comprehensive Care of Joint Replacement that monitor outcomes and total cost of care.

If a patient gets readmitted, or costs are higher than the national average for certain surgical procedures, then the Medicare regulations in the Bundled Payment programs require hospitals to act as the “general contractor” for a patient, not only when they are in the hospital, but after they leave. This means ensuring the patient goes to a quality rehabilitation center, engages in physical therapy, and takes the right medications, requiring hospitals to try and manage patients long after they have left the hospital. Most hospitals have skeletal procedures for monitoring patients post-discharge.

Cause: Due to huge variations of cost and outcome of well understood procedures that cost Medicare \$14.4B annually, Medicare mandated their Comprehensive Care for Joint Replacement for Hip and Knee replacements, shifting the post-acute care management responsibility to the hospitals performing the surgery.

With 50% of total costs related to hospitalizations occurring post hospital stay, historically there has been no single accountable entity for total cost of care and outcome. While many hospitals agree that providing oversight for the full care plan makes sense, 90% of hospitals reported no sustainable method to follow their patients once they left the hospital to ensure that the patient was improving and care was timely and appropriate. Differing IT systems between hospitals, rehabilitation centers and physicians, plus the patient’s ability to choose almost any care path

makes this tracking a logistical and personnel challenge. Furthermore, care managers in health systems are already stretched, and adding complex manual processes to their workday is not sustainable.

Solution: Created mobile applications that linked securely to the hospital's Electronic Health Record and Case Management systems with a secure messaging interface allow two-way communications between rehabilitation facilities, the hospital and their patients.

The first step was to scan the EHR systems for patients being discharged within 72 hours and send the information securely to rehabilitation centers authorized to do business with the hospital to smooth the hand-off process. Typically, this is a process arranged by phone and fax the day of discharge, leading to people staying in the hospital longer than need be and driving costs up. This better planning benefited the hospital, the rehabilitation center and the patient.

The second step was to provide each patient a mobile application before hospital discharge, that could be used by them or their family members. The discharge plan, along with their care pathway (when a patient should expect to move from rehab to home, or how long they would do physical therapy).

Finally, two way communication between the rehabilitation centers and the care manager, was added so that if there were a problem along the way, such as a temperature or infection post surgery, the rehab center knew who and how to contact the hospital. Typically, if a patient gets ill, the rehab center would send them back to the hospital via ambulance, a costly, and often unnecessary step. Alerting the hospital real time of post surgical issues means being able to often solve the problem while in rehab.

Impact: Substantial ROI's (3x-6x annually) can be offered to health systems, due to increased follow through medical appointments, better bed utilization, and program awards, both in the form of penalty avoidance and bonus due to better than average performance.

All hospitals can benefit; the specific return is based on a number of factors; the total number of discharges annually, the percentage of Medicare and dual eligible patients, and the occupancy

rate of the hospital. Only 16% of hospitals currently take advantage of specific high rate doctor's visits post surgery because post discharge tracking is currently difficult. In addition to hard savings, there are other positive factors such as patient satisfaction and loyalty that benefit the health system.