

Program Spurs Improvements in Care Transitions



Margie Namie, RN, MPH, CPHQ, divisional vice president of quality at Mercy Health in southwest Ohio, was honored to be named one of 73 Innovation Advisors (IAs) in the first cohort of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Innovation Center (CCMI). Her participation in the program brought an added bonus: reductions in readmissions and costs.

**Aligning Forces
for Quality**

Improving Health & Health Care
in Communities Across America
www.forces4quality.org



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Lessons Learned

- Change is local, but the work we're doing provides a vehicle to understand better our local challenges so we can more readily identify and disseminate best practices.
- Most of the projects are not focused within the four walls of the hospital, but instead look at how we can better create an integrated network of services that is patient-centered and cost effective.
- “It takes a village” to reduce preventable readmissions. The Care Transitions Team is only as effective as the partnerships it builds with home care, physicians, and community agencies.

The IA program divides participants into groups composed of members with similar or aligned projects, thus offering considerable exposure to shared mentoring and learning. Namie works with a group focusing on safe transitions across settings of care and aiming to reduce preventable readmissions. Mercy Health has implemented two such programs, and the results have been impressive so far.

Because the CMMI program requires all programs to measure the three elements of Medicare's three-part aim of better health, better care, and lower cost, Mercy could demonstrate that its care transition program reduced 30-day readmissions for heart failure, heart attack, and pneumonia by 12 percent

across four of the six Mercy hospitals during the first two months of 2012. Further, the hospitals experienced a net cost reduction of more than \$25,000.

Similarly, the care coordinator pilot project noted a 29 percent decrease in emergency department visits, a 49 percent decrease in admissions, and a 16 percent decrease in readmissions.

Such gains don't come easily, of course. “CMMI warned us that they—and we—are building a plane in mid-air, and that frequently has been the case,” said Namie. “We are constantly learning from one another, although networking in such a large cohort can be challenging.”

Namie has found the experience of being an Innovation Advisor exciting, despite its challenges. “The leaders of CMMI have made it very clear that they look upon the IAs as their ‘boots on the ground’ to describe what is really happening in health care and how some of the changes coming out of the Affordable Care Act might affect it,” she said.

“I encourage everyone to consider becoming an IA. The experience is just tremendous, and the connections that are made are invaluable.”

Contact

Margie Namie
Divisional Vice President Quality
Mercy Health
mwnamie@health-partners.org