

Northwest Community Home Health Care

Shannon Quaritch, RN, BS. CPHQ

Quality Improvement Specialist

3060 Salt Creek Lane, Suite 110

Arlington Heights, IL 60005

Phone: 847.618.7855

Summary of Project

In 2004, Northwest Community Home Health Care undertook two very strong, ambitious, and forward-thinking projects based on their performance data. Using OCS and CMS data hand-in-hand, the agency focused on two indicators—*improvement in status of surgical wounds* and *improvement in management of oral medications*. Each project involved intensive staff education and standardization of practices, training on OASIS accuracy, and a new level of multidisciplinary communication and coordination. Each project resulted in improved clinical, utilization, and financial outcomes.

Project Description

When Northwest Community Home Health Care took a look at their OCS and CMS data, they found room to improve in two measures that were very important to their organization—*Improvement in the status of surgical wounds* and *improvement in the management of oral medications*. These measures were identified because of the intense effort to bring advanced wound care expertise to the agency and the need to safely manage oral medication was relevant to almost every patient the agency serves.

As part of their performance improvement efforts, the agency made an intensive effort to understand the key drivers behind their performance. They looked to evaluating data integrity, performance metrics within subsets of the patient population, care practices, and staffing trends.

One of the most profound findings of this investigation was the agency's realization that they had invested significant time and expense recruiting and orienting highly-trained wound, ostomy, and continence nurses (WOCN) only to see them move on from the agency after a very short tenure. To halt this trend, NW Community's administration decided to develop expertise from within and invest in the existing staff. Four staff nurses became certified wound specialists. Those nurses helped create new processes for treating wound patients.

The investigation also brought to light data integrity issues that negatively impacted both measures of care. NW Community took a multidisciplinary approach to educate clinical staff with assessment techniques that lead to significant improvement in data accuracy.

As the staff was trained and new processes were implemented, the agency kept a close eye on their data to watch for both the positive changes they were expecting as well as any potential unforeseen negative changes.

Project Results

With start of care OASIS assessments being completed more accurately, the agency saw increased case weights and improved outcomes as patients' needs were better assessed and managed. Financial outcomes also improved as a result of the case weight increase, both from more accurate data and with the increase in therapy utilization for patients not formerly identified as needing therapy services.

OCS Tools Used to Support the Project

- OCS-BBI Reporter
 - ✦ OCS-BBI Reporter: Executive Summary Report, Case Mix, Select Clinical Indicators, Quality Tracking, Utilization Summary, and Bubble Graphs
 - ✦ Corporate Compare Report.
 - Drill-down and look at subsets of patients
- OCS-EPIC

Processes Defined and Implemented

- Conduct in-depth data and process analysis to understand the drivers behind outcomes
- Review clinical outcomes, utilization, and clinical practice
- Develop action plan to build expertise within existing clinical staff
- Use constraints to evaluate performance by subset by clinician (wounds)
- Increased monitoring of OASIS accuracy
- Revised practices as indicated by clinical outcomes trends (using OCS-EPIC)
- Continuous evaluation of action plan
- Quarterly review of OCS-BBI Reports, using service line and BBI-Elite drill down
- Ongoing communication of results
- Rely heavily on the use of graphs to share results to staff