



Pat Vigilante

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*“We used Perforum data to establish benchmark targets for
our developing performance improvement process”*

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Summary

The Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) in New York City is the largest Certified Home Health Agency in the country. VNSNY Hospice is a critical component of the organization's comprehensive services. While the primary focus at VNSNY is home health, the hospice wanted to identify a clinical outcome measure that would be meaningful to hospice patients, their families and referrers. The agency used data from the Perforum Integrated Benchmark Reports to analyze performance of peer organizations and to determine an appropriate benchmark for the pain controlled within 48 hours of admission to the hospice program measure. As a result of their dedication and hard work over the past two years, the agency achieved their internal goals and exceeded the national norm for this measure.

Project Description

VNSNY embraces a culture dedicated to analyzing data and integrating it into their performance improvement efforts. Due to the size of the VNSNY home health agency, many of the metrics have a CHHA focus and, for many measures, are not especially meaningful for hospice. Jeanne Dennis, Executive Director, and Pat Vigilante, Director of Quality Improvement and Education, researched hospice industry benchmarking and identified Perforum as the best source for hospice benchmarking data and performance improvement ideas.

Upon review of many different clinical outcome measures, Dennis and Vigilante concluded that the NHPCO performance measure *Safe & Comfortable Dying: Comfort achieved within 48 hours* would be an appropriate, meaningful measure to hospice patients, families, referrers, and agency employees. The NHPCO Patient Core Measures Sheet and Comfortable Dying Protocol were both adapted to meet the needs of the VNSNY program.

The team started with educating frontline staff and team managers about the new data collection process and then established a performance goal based on the Perforum group mean score for this measure. In addition to reporting the data to Perforum on a quarterly basis, they also reported internal and comparative results to VNSNY staff, the VNSNY senior leadership team, and the VNSNY Board of Directors.

By educating staff, incorporating pain assessment into new clinician orientation, and revamping the pain assessment paperwork, the first few quarters saw positive progress towards the hospice's goal. VNSNY Hospice results for the patient comfort outcome quickly reached and surpassed the national norm. Then they hit a roadblock—performance fell below their target in 2003. Looking for the cause of the stumble, the team determined that staff had stopped following the established process of ensuring that data was being collected accurately on all admissions. The agency's performance again rose to above the national norm once they reeducated the staff.

In 2004, the agency made a structural change in their admission process, moving towards an admission team model. After this change, their scores once again dropped. The agency identified that there was a communication breakdown between relaying information from the admission team to the clinical team, with inconsistent or untimely reporting of pain on admission. Once again, the issue was quickly addressed by establishing a standard for reporting pain/comfort issues upon admission.

Project Results

Thanks to the dedication and enthusiasm of the VNSNY hospice staff, the team was able to maintain their performance above the national norm—with the exception of 2 quarters—for over two years. Through consistent analysis of the Perforum Quarterly Benchmark Reports, the agency was able to immediately identify any lapses in performance and take swift corrective action.

OCS Tools Used to Support the Project

- Perforum Integrated Benchmark Program
 - ✦ Perforum Integrated Benchmark Reports
 - ✦ Perforum Individual Performance Review

Processes Defined and Implemented

- Find a performance measurement system that is meaningful to the agency and its stakeholders
- Collect data and enter into Perforum database
- Review initial results
- Direct efforts to a more effective process that supports performance improvement
- Monitor outcomes performance quarterly
- Share results with stakeholders—from field clinicians to the Board of Directors