Case Example: Collaborative Care Protocols for Urgent Interventions to Prevent Readmissions

Visiting Nurse Health System, Atlanta
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The Visiting Nurse Health System (VNHS) in Atlanta has collaborated with local hospitals to develop standard care management protocols for several clinical conditions associated with urgent readmissions. The protocols are designed to improve continuity of treatment across inpatient and outpatient settings. They also prevent hospital readmissions by implementing urgent treatment interventions faster and in the home.

VNHS has both rural and urban locations, and the protocols guide clinical staff by providing parameters for immediate interventions that can prevent readmissions. For example, the agency collaborates with the hospital on heart failure standard protocols that allow nurses to provide IV push Lasix and potassium replacement under specific clinical parameters. The agency also implemented an ileostomy protocol focused on preventing dehydration. Agency RNs conduct clinical assessments and identify changes in condition that require implementation of a protocol. In developing the program, VNHS also works with an infusion therapy partner to streamline IV medications and standardize interventions according to quality standards.

Measurement and evaluation are important element of the VNHS work to standardize protocols. The agency evaluates core measures around readmissions as well as measures relating to the Bundled Payments for Care Improvements (BPCI) Initiative. Since roll-out of these strategies, VNHS has experienced a reduction in rehospitalization for the target conditions of heart failure and ileostomy. VNHS readmission rate for heart failure (HF) patients declined from 27% in January 2016 to 10% in May 2016 and for ileostomy patients from 37% to 7% over the last year.

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