Case Study: The Sutter Center for Integrated Care (SCIC) - Always Event

Sutter Care at Home is one of Northern California’s largest not-for-profit, community-based home care providers. The Sutter Center for Integrated Care (SCIC) is a value-driven organization affiliated with Sutter Care at Home dedicated to providing leadership that cultivates new ideas to solve today’s healthcare challenges.

SCIC believes …

- All patients everywhere deserve to be treated with the utmost dignity and respect, and that those who care for our patients deserve to be armed with the best practices from all applicable disciplines.

- Shared decision making is the key to improving patient quality of life and concomitantly brings satisfaction and joy to the care provider.

- Health care providers want to provide excellent high quality care.

- Our current healthcare system is broken due to a focus on acute care, resulting in large gaps, inefficiencies and less than desirable outcomes for patients with chronic diseases and conditions.

- These problems can be solved by those providers in the trenches who are dedicated to utilizing their expert clinical knowledge in partnership with patients and families and the expert knowledge they possess about their unique situations and desires. Remarkable examples of excellence in caring partnerships already exist.

- Dedicated, caring clinicians can come together to solve these problems if they can clearly see what is possible. SCIC exists to paint the picture of excellence for these dedicated individuals.

The “Always Event” Initiative was based on a model developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement. The ‘always event’ is the flip side of a ‘never event,’ a concept that has become a pillar of patient safety initiatives and one that relies on consistent application of safety systems. For an always event, staff at SCIC are trained to always ask patients, ‘what matters most to you today?’ every time they begin an interaction. The consistency should make the patient experience question an ‘always event.’ The goal is to promote patient-centered care and shared decision-making. The initiative builds a simple method of engaging patients into every day practices of staff; it makes the process seamless and
easy by embedding data collection into patient records and the care process. The intent is to ‘Make the Right Thing to Do the Easy Thing to Do.’

**Genesis:** The initiative is part of SCIC’s Integrated Care Management (ICM) course and tool kit.

**Target Population:** All patients referred to Sutter Care at Home (SCAH) Home Health and Hospice and included in the always event initiative.

**What it is:** Staff are trained to always ask patients, ‘what matters most to you today?’ every time they begin an interaction. The question is asked in the hospital before discharge by an in-hospital home care liaison and documented in the patient record. The discussion is continued in the home by the nurse case manager. Discussions are documented on a personal health record page called “what matters most.” The information is reviewed by team members, and is used to guide further discussion about the patient’s priorities.

**How to ask:** Clinicians use open-ended questions and OARS communication for verification of what the patient has said. Information is documented in the EHR, is projected at multi-disciplinary case conferences and guides care delivery discussion. The OARS Model is used in motivational interviewing and includes four basic skills: Open Questions (O), Affirmations (A), Reflective Listening (R) and Summarizing (S).

**Accelerated by:** Leadership buy-in and commitment to person-centered care has been an important factor in ensuring adoption of the model.

**Process and Outcome Measures:** The initiative should help to improve patient experience measured in the CAHPS survey and may also help to engage patients in ways that influence other health improvement measures. Measurement is under way.

**Getting it done:**
- IT develops place in EHR to document ‘What Matters Most’ to the patient
- Discussion of the always event and need to identify patient goals becomes part of routine case conference meetings
- Training and reinforcement is done through supervisor “ride along” / rounding with all staff
- The organization continually works to create a culture of a learning environment that values person-centered care
- The program brings in health literate expertise to assist with development of training and tools that engage patients in identifying what matters most on a given day and shared decision making

**How to spread the intervention:** Share success stories in all case conferences, leadership & management meetings, and in employee newsletter

**Contact:**
Sutter Care At Home  

Sutter Center for Integrated Care  