

Hospital Name:

Memorial Hospital of York

Address:

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Contact:

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2006 ED Volume: 32,093
Growth from 2005: 8.7%
Total Staffed Hospital Beds: 100
Acute ED Beds: unknown
Fast Track: Yes
Clinical Decision Unit: No

Problem to be Resolved:

Need for enhanced interactions
among ED staff to increase
efficiency

Tools Provided:

- Flow tech duties

Key Words:

- Flow technician
- ED throughput
- Patient safety

Lessons Learned:

The pilot project helped
determine exactly what the job
would entail. During the trial,
everyone who would interact with
the flow technicians gave input to
help define the job description.

Reason for Change:

Gregory Smolin, DO, FACOEP, FACEP had always been frustrated by the fact that he often spends up to 85 percent of his work day doing tasks that actually distracted from the primary focus of his work. He felt that this was both inefficient and not in the best interest of a patient's safety. After observing how members of Congress use their staffs, he was inspired to create similar staff positions in the ED.

Implementation:

After a two week trial using existing staff members, Memorial Hospital of York created two flow technician positions to handle such tasks as discharge instructions, finding charts and results for physicians, and checking to see that all patients have received the treatments that were ordered for them.

The flow technicians work from 11:00 am until 11:00 pm. When they arrive for their shifts, they figure out where every patient is and how far the physician has gone with the treatment. With this information, they are ready to help the physicians.

There are seven objectives for the flow technicians. These are:

- Enhance flow in the ED
- Improve patient care in the ED
- Decrease time spent waiting for treatment
- Decrease delays between treatment (ie waiting for results)
- Decrease patient time spent in the ED
- Decrease stress for the doctors, nurses, techs, X-ray, and all other ED staff
- Facilitate communication between staff

By working with and assisting the entire ED staff, the flow technicians have been successful at meeting these objectives.

Results/Impact:

Although no actual data is available at this point to offer as evidence of improvement, Smolin is certain that the flow techs have saved time for the ED physicians and have improved patient safety.

Another benefit has been that flow techs enhance communication among the physician, the patient, the family, and staff.

Flow Tech Duties (Excerpt)

1. Pull up electronic medical records

- A. Old electrocardiograms (EKGs). These allow doctor to compare current EKG to note if there are any acute changes.
- B. Patient's recent ED visit. For patients that were here recently, flow techs print the lab values, discharge summary, etc., before the doctor sees the patient. This allows the doctor to see what tests already have been done and what they concluded, which provides continuation of care
- C. Last admitting doctor. This record allows the doctor to quickly choose the appropriate admitting doctor and facilitates patient admittance process.

2. Prepares discharge instructions

- A. Everyone receives a referral if they do not have a family doctor. This is significant, because the ED sees some patients again and again if they do not have a family doctor. This referral allows them to get proper patient care for additional tests that the ED cannot schedule.
- B. More detailed instructions. Flow techs can spend more time typing discharge instructions and adding specific instructions to remind each patient of the doctor's recommendations.

3. Page Phlebotomist to start intravenous (IV) line, and draw labs as soon as the doctor decides to order them.

This used to occur only after the secretary received the chart, entered labs in the computer, then put the chart in the order box. Labs get to the lab faster now, and the doctor receives results faster and can give disposition faster.

4. Inform staff of pending discharges (people to be discharged in the next five to 10 minutes).

This information allows staff to help patient back into clothing, pull IV, etc., and allows doctor to dictate the chart while the flow tech prepares the discharge instructions. Then, when the doctor is finished dictating, the instructions are ready and the patients can be discharged faster because they already are dressed.

Source: Gregory Smolin, DO, FACOEP, FACEP, ED Medical Director, Memorial Hospital of York (PA) County.