

9) Call Me! Campaign

Winchester Community ACO

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Many patients who find themselves in a situation experiencing worsening symptoms often don't know if they should call the doctor or go to the hospital.

The "Call Me! Campaign" is exactly as it sounds – we wanted patients to call as soon as they were concerned – at the first sign their condition began to worsen. This helped manage their symptoms before an Emergency Department (ED) visit or hospitalization.

The goal of the Call Me! Campaign is to encourage patients to call their primary care provider's (PCP) office when they start showing early signs and/or symptoms of disease exacerbation. The aim was to decrease ED visits and hospital admissions and increase patient experience. When patients call with their worsening symptoms, we wanted them to be seen that same day. If practices could not schedule same day appointments, a clinical provider directs the patient to the nearest urgent care location or ED, depending on level of risk.

The PCP's and inpatient clinical staff educated patients on how to better identify and manage their worsening symptoms. Part of their education process was to encourage the patients to call the office at the very first sign of an exacerbation. We don't want patients waiting until they are so sick that they need a higher level of care (hospitalization). Preventive care is the way healthcare is headed because of the Affordable Care Act. Patients should receive high-level disease management in an outpatient setting, by PCP or specialist, so they never need the next level of care. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services predicts that if patients receive high-level outpatient care unplanned admissions will decrease and the patients' quality of life will increase or be stabilized.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

We chose two practices to see how successful this initiative would be. One practice was the pilot the program and a comparable practice was the control practice so we would be able to see what/if any impact this program would have.

In the piloted practice, they saw a 38 percent year-over-year decrease in Emergency Department visits and a 42 percent year-over-year decrease in the number of admissions. Additionally, the Call Me! Campaign had an added opportunity for the piloted practice to increase its patient experience scores. We found that patients who have these high-risk conditions appreciate immediate follow-up and same-day appointments.

LESSONS LEARNED

We learned that when patients call their PCP office, at the first sign of exacerbation, we were able to prevent ED visits. We need to ensure that we had sufficient slots within a day to give same day access to patients in need.