Peer to Peer Intervention to Reduce Early Termination from Cardiac Rehabilitation

The Patient Ambassador Program – A Quality Improvement Project

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Background

The Miriam Hospital Center for Cardiac Fitness is a 12,000 square foot, state of the art Cardiac and Pulmonary rehabilitation facility staffed with over 25 health care professionals. The program offers six cardiac rehab classes a day, enrolling approximately 800 cardiac rehab patients per year. In 2014 the facility experienced a 23% increase in cardiac rehab patient visits.

Measure

Program data collected in a homegrown database from 2012 to 2014 was reviewed for dropout rates, reasons for termination and number of completed sessions.

Improve

April 2015, the Patient Ambassador Program was implemented to reduce dropout rates of non-compliant patients.

The following mission and goals for the Patient Ambassador Program were established:

- Care transition of incoming cardiac rehab patients
- Provide encouragement regarding utilization of support services (dietitian, psychologist, etc.)
- Provide peer support through sharing of experiences
- Encourage long term health goals for patients being discharged

As patient ambassadors implemented these goals they created a more welcoming environment and a more engaged patient. A group of eight to ten successful cardiac rehab graduates were hand selected to participate and volunteer one hour per week to an assigned class. Each ambassador was paired with new cardiac rehab patients who were within the initial six sessions.

In August 2015, further analysis of patient satisfaction was employed, resulting in the addition of four questions to the discharge program evaluation.

Control

Program evaluation surveys at discharge include utilization and satisfaction questions regarding the Patient Ambassador intervention. A quarterly review of survey scores and dropout rates are summarized, evaluated and reported to Ambassadors. Quarterly Ambassador Meetings are held to discuss survey results, feedback and or barriers of ambassadors.

Review of Patient Ambassador program satisfaction reveals that program component most commonly reported as helpful is providing Peer to Peer social support.

What are patients saying...

"My ambassador was very helpful and friendly"

"He was a nice touch and added a comfort level for me"

"I think my ambassador did a great job"

Program mission & guidelines and additional resources

Peer to Peer intervention was established through the implementation of a Patient Ambassador program.

The quality improvement initiative is to maintain patient satisfaction >90%. Quarterly, these results are summarized and reported to Patient Ambassadors.

An overall increase of 125% over the three year period.

Dropout rates in Cardiac Rehabilitation during 2013 and 2014 averaged 23.6%. In an effort to maintain dropout rates, despite a 23% increase in patient visits, further review of early termination rates was performed. Through review of the dropout statistics, it was observed that termination rates due to non-compliance had increased from 14.5%, 25.6% to 32.6%; respectfully 2012, 2013 and 2014. An overall increase of 125% over the three year span. A departmental quality improvement initiative to reduce early termination rates and improve retention of non-compliant patients in cardiac rehab was established, resulting in the implementation of a peer to peer intervention program.

Analysis revealed highest dropout rates for all cardiac rehab patients occurred within sessions 1-9. Most prevalent reason for dropout was non-compliance which continued to increase over the three year time frame.

Dropout rates for non-compliant patients began to decline after the implementation of the Patient Ambassador program, from a high of 32.6% in 2014 to a current 12% in the first six months of 2017.

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These questions assess:

- Access to patient ambassador
- Level of helpfulness
- Components of the program that were most helpful
- Additional comments section

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