

WISHIN Works for Aurora's Care-Management Program

Aurora Health Care established an intensive care-management program for frequent ED users in 2014 to reduce non-emergent ED visits and connect patients to medical homes and other health resources in the community. As the program has evolved, Aurora case managers have found that WISHIN Pulse is a crucial tool for their care-coordination activities.

Aurora defines frequent ED users as patients who have eleven or more ED visits in a twelve-month period. Nationally, these patients represent only five percent of the total patient population, but account for 50 percent of all health care expenditures. According to data from the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership, 47 percent of all ED visits in Milwaukee are for non-emergent reasons and 56 percent of those non-emergent visits are made by Medicaid enrollees.

Robert Marrs, Manager of Integrated Family Support Services at Aurora, said Aurora's goal with this program is to "provide the most effective care possible to the people who need it the most by reducing the frequency of non-emergent visits, better establishing these patients in medical homes within the community and providing them with greater stability at home and in the community at large."

Even though the program is still transitional-care based it has evolved into something that is more social-work driven. "Case managers are now working more closely with patients around their unmet social needs, which often act as barriers to positive health outcomes," said Marrs.

Erin Stumbras, Case Manager at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, said, "WISHIN has been a crucial component to the program's positive evolution." She has roughly 80 patients on her caseload at a time and relies heavily on WISHIN Pulse in her daily work flow. "Each morning I check Pulse to see which of my patients had an ED visit the night before," she said. "A lot of my patients present for non-emergent reasons and being able to see who visited the ED and when has allowed me to better follow up with them and get into more detailed conversations with them about unmet social needs, behavioral health conditions, drug and alcohol abuse and family and relationship issues. Pulse is also extremely useful for gathering basic patient demographic information and the integration (of Pulse) with the state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program is outstanding."

Stumbras says the biggest advantage of access to the clinical data available in Pulse has been the ability to track patients' history of ED utilization. "It has been crucial to understanding patients' patterns of ED use—I can see why they are presenting to other hospitals and notice trends in where they are

presenting and why. In addition, if I suspect they are using other EDs outside the Aurora network I can do a deeper dive into Pulse and see what other utilization they've had."

The success of Aurora's program is staggering. "We followed six separate cohorts for a six-month period," said Marrs, "and for the 255 patients who completed six months of services there was a 44-percent reduction in ED charges and a 46-percent reduction in ED visits." Marrs and his team wondered whether these were simply short-term gains with no long-term sustainability. "We followed four of the cohorts for an additional six-month period and I am excited to say the trend continued down and it's been pretty significant," Marrs said. "From the first date of enrollment to 12 months later those patients had a 73-percent total decrease in the number of ED visits."

When asked to comment on the success of the program Marrs said, "What we've done is created a transitional care program that builds a bridge between the acute-care or ambulatory-care setting and the community so that people have a safe, comprehensive transition back to where they live. We help manage that transition and provide care that looks at every aspect of that person's life—we're not just focused on their medical condition(s)—but we're aware that factors such as their financial health, their spiritual health, their behavioral health, what kind of family/social support they have in place and whether their neighborhood is safe to live in all matter to their long-term, physical health. Paying attention to these factors and better coordinating care has led to better long-term relationships with patients, and in doing so we're able to learn more, know more and have a greater impact."

To learn more about Aurora's success in empowering people to better manage their own health through this program watch [Tiffany's Story](#). For questions about WISHIN Pulse services or for more information about becoming a Pulse participant please contact WISHIN at: wishin@wishin.org.