QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TIPS

Huddle up!

by Lisa S. on Monday, May 23, 2011 3:05:41 PM MST

Brief daily meetings keep care team informed, focused on patient service

The care team forms the heart of the patient-centered medical home (PCMH). Daily team huddles serve as strategy sessions to keep that heart functioning at optimum capacity. The PCMH care team — usually a physician, a nurse and/or medical assistant(s) and a front-desk employee — use huddles to plan their approach for the next segment of the day and prepare for challenges, such as complex patients who require additional time.

Huddles are frequent, brief "check-ins" related to specific actions and goals. The physician and his/her staff review the schedule and patient charts before each morning session and afternoon session in the clinic. They then plan the agenda for each patient’s visit.

Huddles:
• Promote communication among team members;
• Avoid duplicated work;
• Ensure that members plan tasks with necessary input from others; and
• Promote teamwork.

In general, care team huddles should:
• Occur twice a day — before morning and afternoon patient appointments;
• Be kept to less than 10 minutes;
• Become established in the practice’s routine;
• Stay focused and pertinent; and
• Allow no interruptions.

The morning huddle should start with a review of the previous day and the status of unfinished medical work, such as calls to consultants, review of lab and X-ray results and patient follow-up. The huddle should also cover the status of clinic operations, including staffing, equipment and computer operability, patients with unexpected hospital visits, meeting and special events or external issues.

Team members then should identify:
• Patients with chronic disease;
• Patients who have been in the emergency room or hospitalized;
• Patients who are often late, problematic or have high service needs;
• Canceled appointments; and
• Patients for whom the provider will need assistance.

At the afternoon huddle, the team evaluates the appointments scheduled for the second half of the day. Members...
may also exchange information about the patients seen that morning. Huddles also serve a team-building function. Members should be encouraged to maintain a positive, collegial attitude. Everyone should seek to learn from mistakes and review what went right, as well as what went wrong, so the practice can adopt more efficient processes. If you're not already using huddles in your practice, try them. Used properly, they smooth clinic functions for providers and patients alike.

**Huddle Resources**

**Huddle video**


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**heidi f. 1 (posts) Sunday, June 26, 2011 1:33:40 AM MST**

Lisa, do you use a written form or tool to communicate with the reception staff, radiology or lab, Heidi