

Decreasing Emergency Department (ED) Visits Among Residents at Northwood Lodge

- **Organization:** Northwood Lodge Home for the Aged
- **Author:** Debbie Larson, Director of Care (Debbie.larson@kenoradistricthomes.ca)

Overview

Northwood Lodge is implementing a coordinated effort to decrease emergency department (ED) visits for ambulatory care-sensitive conditions among all residents. The strategy combines stronger external partnerships, expanded in-home clinical capacity, and clearer shared routines so timely assessment and treatment can occur in the home whenever safe and appropriate. Priority is placed on reliable communication with the local hospital and Family Health Team, consistent onboarding of new community physicians, and increasing nurse practitioner (NP) availability to manage life-limiting conditions and avert transfers. Progress is tracked through counts of ED visits alongside qualitative assessment of each initiative's impact on resident and family experience.

Key Elements of Initiative

Change Ideas Tested or Implemented

- Initiated quarterly meetings with the local hospital to foster collaboration, mutual understanding, and joint projects (e.g., palliative/end-of-life care), and to review incidents for continuous improvement.
- Coordinated with the Family Health Team to be notified of new physicians and locums arriving in the community, including facility tours and distribution of an informational pamphlet to orient new medical staff.
- Increased Nurse Practitioner (NP) hours from previous levels to 20 hours per week, allowing for more thorough resident assessments and timely treatment of life-limiting conditions, thereby reducing the need for ED visits.

Team Members Involved

- Internal: Director of Care (DOC), Site Administrator, NP at Northwood Lodge.

- External: Red Lake Family Health Team Director, Nurse Manager and Chief Nursing Officer at Red Lake Margaret Cochenour Memorial Hospital.

Target Population

- All residents of Northwood Lodge.

Objective of Change Ideas

- To meet performance targets for reducing the number of residents sent to the ED.

Measurement of Progress

- Tracked the number of ED visits and evaluated the outcomes of each initiative, recognizing that positive resident and family experiences are valuable even if targets are not always met.

Implementation Experience: Successes & Challenges

Successes

- Established regular quarterly meetings with the hospital to address common issues affecting residents' ED visits.
- Successfully toured every new physician, locum, and resident physician joining the community, and circulated the informational pamphlet to physician groups.
- Secured increased NP hours, improving resident care and reducing ED transfers.

Enablers of Success

- Additional funding supported the increase in NP hours.
- The small community setting fostered respect and commitment among stakeholders, facilitating regular meetings and open discussions.
- The hospital's Nurse Manager actively ensured new physicians received facility tours.

Challenges & Solutions

- Difficulty in facilitating orientation tours for new physicians was addressed through frequent and open communication to ensure timely tours.

- Prior to increased NP hours, the limited time made it challenging for the NP to keep up; securing funding and a committed NP resolved this.
- Reliance on hospital administration to set meetings led to irregular scheduling; Northwood Lodge took the lead in initiating meetings, resulting in regular quarterly sessions.

Advice for Other Teams

- Build strong relationships with external partners, maintain open communication, and remain persistent in pursuing goals.

Future Steps & Sustainability

Next Steps

- Continue current practices, which have established a productive rhythm and are expected to yield improvements in the upcoming fiscal/QIP year.

Embedding into Policy or Workflow

- Currently relying on routine workflows, with plans to develop formal policies and procedures in the future to further sustain and standardize the initiative.

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