

Dedicated Emergency Department CCAC Case Managers: Playing Their Part in the Provision of Seamless Care

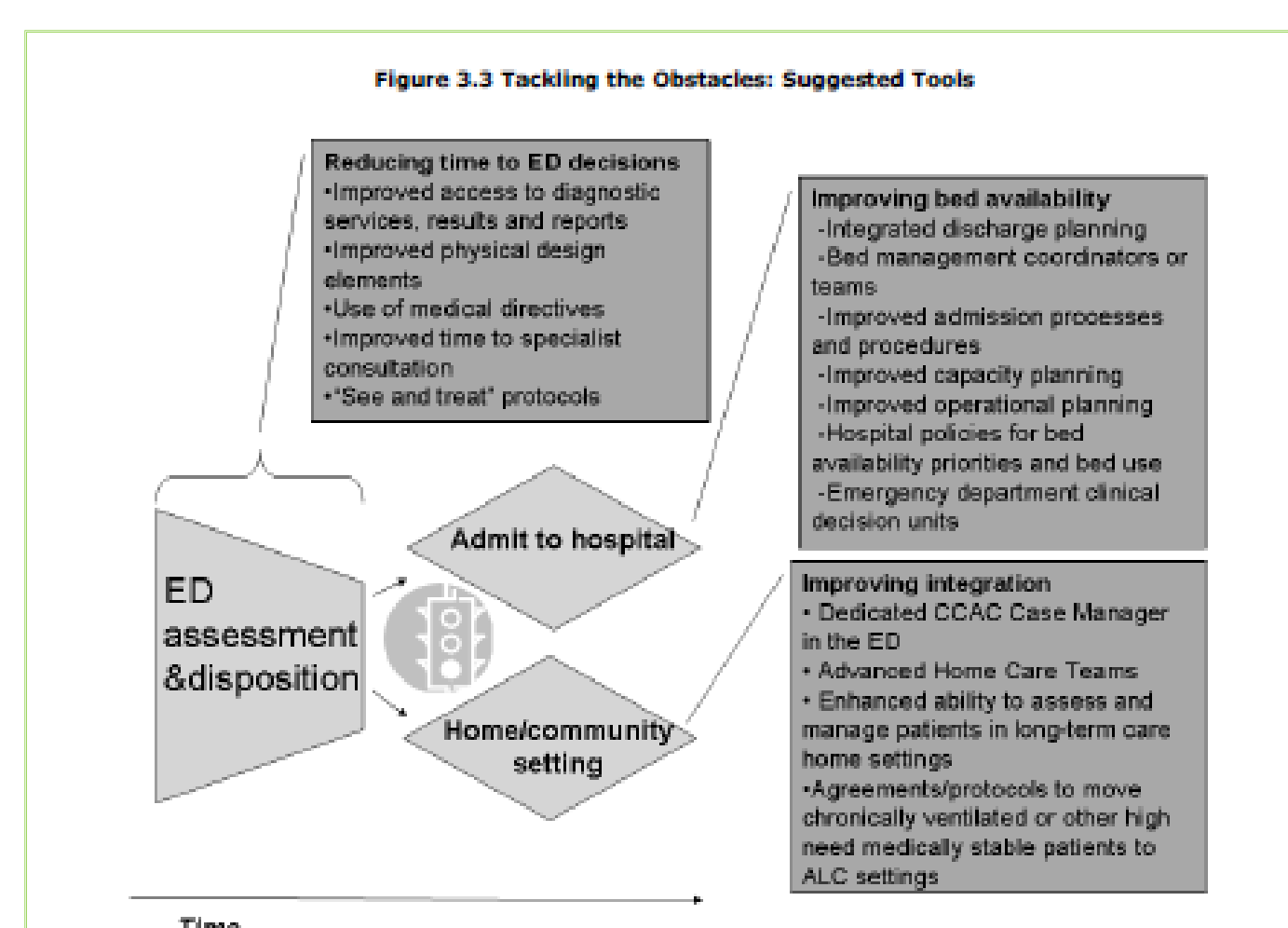
Introduction

The Emergency Department (ED) is a central hub, a critical access point of the health care system. As clients flow through the various components of the health care system a number of obstacles can prevent timely access to care.

Emergency department overcrowding is a longstanding healthcare access issue that has its roots in system-wide problems that require system-wide solutions; it manifests itself as inadequate access to care.

Currently, the Central East LHIN Initiative – Pay for Results Program allows an opportunity for the development of solutions to deal with the increasing client flow times for entering, treating and discharging clients through Central East LHIN EDs.

One of the measures implemented to address this problem was the creation of ED dedicated CCAC Case Managers, whose role provides the much needed collaboration at a critical “point of transition.”



Actions

The success of the ED Dedicated CMs involves establishing a clearly defined role within the health care system as a respected and valued member of the interprofessional team. Therefore, it was necessary to understand what was inhibiting client flow and how could the CCAC collaborate with their health care partners in developing a solution?



There are 4 ER visits/year for every 10 people in Ontario.



Reason for ER Wait Times:

- Slow transfer of clients who are ready to leave ER
- Poor coordination, leading to long delays
- Unnecessary demand

Why are Clients Returning to the ER?

- Incomplete treatment
- Poor communication
- Lack of understanding
- Lack of community supports

What Can Be Done to Avoid Returns?

- Enhance education and community supports (Create Linkages)
- Improve integrated care at points of transition
- Knowing how the CCAC could work with our hospital partners is one piece of the puzzle

How do we ensure all involved parties understand and utilize their skills and abilities and work together to create a system of excellence?

Results

3 Emergency Department Dedicated Case Managers started in 3 of our local hospitals to assist in the transition from ER to home.

In discussion with the CMs the following areas were identified as challenges that needed to be addressed for program success:

- Increased expectations from the hospital partners for the CCAC to provide enhanced services and frequent requests for inappropriate services
- Lack of understanding related to the time it takes to complete a new referral for CCAC services
- Emergency Department inconsistencies related to necessary order entry and key instructions
- Constantly faced with the ethical dilemma and struggle between CCAC eligibility criteria and the hospital pressure to send clients home
- Struggle with feeling of lack of equity as they rush clients to make crucial decisions regarding care and housing, e.g. Application for LTC, Application for CCP, or Retirement Homes for respite care, etc.
- Identified need for client education on who to call and how to access community services – role as system navigator, providing information and referral

In order to address these challenges, an education program was developed with a goal to enhance and clearly define the role of CCAC Case Manager and the relationship with the Interprofessional Emergency Department team, facilitating the important intercollaborative partnership between hospital and community.

Challenges

Due to the vast number of new LHIN initiatives and priority projects, the education program was not able to be delivered to its intended audience.

The creation and sustainability of a quality interprofessional healthcare team is essential for the care of seniors as they move across the continuum of health.

The opportunity for true collaboration exists as we attempt to foster an excellent working partnership, however there is a lack of understanding and trust that impacts this relationship. In order to support this collaborative relationship it is imperative that we make every attempt to communicate and understand the skills and abilities of each and every person.

Understanding the roles and responsibilities allows for a more efficient system, “right person, right time, right place”, eliminating unnecessary and sometimes repetitive work. Knowledge sharing is the key ingredient for true understanding.

Providing face to face education for multiple sites with staff who work varying hours is a challenge. In order to address this challenge a creative and unique approach is required to ensure consistent messaging.

In order to maximize the attention of a large audience such as ED staff multiple teaching strategies must be employed, such as:

- Face to face interaction
- Information Posters
- Pamphlets, Intraorganizational Newsletters
- Email and Multimedia
- Videoconferencing
- Online Learning Modules

Lessons Learned

The location of the Case Managers within the emergency department has improved the interprofessional relationship between the emergency department and the CCAC staff by increasing the visibility of the CCAC in the ED; There is a concomitant awareness and understanding and thus referrals for the services available through CCACs.

It is believed that location of the Case Manager within the ED contributes more than just ease of referral. Absence of a dedicated Case Manager within the ED will slow down the CCAC referral process as Case Managers would at times be elsewhere in the hospital seeing patients, and would be unable to respond as quickly as they are able to currently consequently increasing the length of stay for particular patients in the ED.

In addition, the absence of a Case Manager in the ED could result in a lower rate of referrals to the CCAC and an increase in admissions or a rise in potential clients returning to the ED. This frequent return to the ED could be avoided as Case Managers are in a position to provide the necessary support to maintain the clients appropriately in their communities.

New Evidence/Best Practices



The introduction of a dedicated Case Manager in each of the three emergency departments has supported reduced wait times and enhanced discharge planning. The Central East CCAC experienced significant increases in CCAC referral volumes and firmly believe many of these patients would have returned to the ED or been admitted to hospital without the initiation and coordination of these services.

Next Steps

The effectiveness of any program requires a commitment from all of the stakeholders involved. This allows for the development of a common goal of providing seamless care for seniors living in our communities.

“Buy in” is necessary with any new initiative. Health care professionals want the best for their clients. This central goal facilitates the notion of interorganizational collaboration and interprofessional care as an ‘easy sell.’ Success of these programs requires that time and energy be spent on educating partners on incredible potential for positive client outcomes.

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