

Electronic call system helps improve post-discharge care

STURDY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Sturdy Memorial Hospital is a 132-bed community hospital located in Attleboro. The Emergency Care Center at Sturdy sees over 50,000 patient visits each year.

Challenge

Emergency Care Center staff at Sturdy Memorial Hospital used to spend hours on the phone with patients following up on discharge orders. They found that many patients didn't fully understand or adhere to their orders, resulting in return visits to the emergency department (ED).

Action

To improve discharge communications with patients, a multidisciplinary ED team researched and partnered with a company to develop an electronic tool for post-discharge calls. Sturdy Memorial now uses CipherHealth, which contacts patients via a call or text 48 hours after they leave the ED. Available in both English and Spanish, the system asks each patient five questions. Based on responses, a nurse or provider will call the patient back if they need additional help.

Monthly, only eight percent of calls require a call back. Sturdy Memorial splits the management of the call-backs to one of four nurses per day, so one person is not making calls five days a week. Questions are customizable and the ED team changes the survey every few months, while always gathering input on whether a patient has questions about discharge or prescriptions and if they are feeling better, worse, or the same. Sturdy Memorial also receives customized reports on the discharge process, allowing the ED team to track and address issues and continually improve care and the patient experience.

Outcome

The number of revisits to the ED has decreased and the system is extremely cost effective, saving the hospital from having to hire extra staff to make the calls.

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