

Engage:

The Monthly Digital Health Newsletter from Q Reviews.



How to Streamline Patient Throughput



Patients are at their most vulnerable when admitted to a hospital. The last thing they need is a poor experience exacerbating an already challenging situation. Providers must address deficiencies in patient experience when they happen, not after. From intake to discharge, there are a number of different challenges that can emerge and slow down throughput in healthcare. And inefficient throughput isn't just a problem in itself. Often, it leads to compounding challenges.

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Inpatient LOS Increased by 19% Across 2022

The American Hospital Association released a study with data analyzed by Strata Decision Technology, comparing LOS data from 2019 to 2022. The study showed that inpatient LOS increased by 19% and 24% when patients were being discharged to a post-acute setting. According to the AHA, delays in discharge result in hospitals and health systems undergoing additional pressure on an already overwhelmed workforce and reduce overall community access to care.

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Health Systems Struggle to Fill Beds Amid Care Delivery Shifts

Many hospitals and health systems struggled to maintain inpatient admissions in 2022, adding to financial woes already compounded by labor shortages and higher operating costs. This is triggering a proposal from CMS to increase inpatient reimbursement by 2.8%. Hospitals complying with quality reporting rules and the electronic health records meaningful-use policy would get this proposed rule by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

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Patients Report Worse Hospital Experiences, While Raising Safety Concerns

Leapfrog placed a spotlight on patient experiences in a report comparing Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Survey (HCAHPS) scores across more than 3,500 U.S. hospitals before (2019) and during (mid-2020 to mid-2021) the COVID-19 pandemic. The greatest decline was seen among patients' experiences with hospital staff responsiveness (a 3.7 percentage point decrease), followed by communication about medicines (a 2.9 point decrease), and cleanliness of the hospital (a 2.9 point decrease).

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The Doctor Is In

Hospice Services Show to Save Medicare \$3.5B

A new study by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at University of Chicago found that hospice care contributed to \$3.5 billion in savings for Medicare in 2019. Within the healthcare continuum, hospice services prioritize a patient's comfort as they approach the end of their life.

We sat down with our Chief Medical Officer Sonni Mun, who was a Director of Hospice and Palliative Care, to get her perspective on why hospice care has an impact on a health system's bottom line.

As a former hospice medical director and chief of palliative care services at a large academic care center, what struck me was this "confirming what hospice providers already knew to be true—that hospice care improves the end-of-life journey for patients and families—it can also save tax dollars".

Yes, we know this, and this is fact. Knowing that quality of care is better while also saving money spent on futile and often painful therapies tells us that hospice care should be standard care at the end of life. Unlike various diseases impacting only some populations, we all die so there is much room for innovation and growth.

One challenge is providing appropriate end of life that isn't brink of death care because hospice referrals occur too late. We can also implement aspects of hospice care for patients with chronic diseases who may not be hospice eligible such as a true interdisciplinary team model using technology to foster team communication.

Also, resource management by understanding which patients require more interventions and engaging patients while they are at home and not just during episodes of acute care will ensure patients receive individualized care and build better relationships with patients and their families.

This study is very important as we look at value based care expanding, which will also benefit from palliative care utilization. It is important that we expand the hospice and palliative care across the care continuum as we continue to see a shift to care outside the four walls of a site of care.



Sonni Mun, MD, Chief Medical Officer of Quality Reviews, shares her thoughts on the role and impact of hospice in improving patient outcomes and reduce costs.

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