



Capturing Success

Project Title: Emergency Department Turnaround

SUMMARY

IMA Consulting worked with physicians, nursing, and leadership to design and implement changes to policies, processes, and practices that dramatically improved satisfaction, costs, and revenues.

PROBLEM

An urban hospital, with 30,000 annual visits, experienced declining patient volumes in its Emergency Department (ED). Since the ED served as a significant source for inpatient admissions, leadership had concerns about continuing trends. The length of time required for service increased, while patient satisfaction simultaneously eroded. The percent of patients leaving without being seen increased steadily, as did the number of hours the department spent on diversion. The use of agency nursing continued to rise, increasing operating costs. As part of a national system, the hospital neared the bottom of the system-group monthly comparisons. Leadership knew the situation required decisive actions be taken.

SOLUTION

IMA Consulting conducted a detailed operational assessment that examined all aspects of ED performance. Instituting a departmental balanced scorecard, with nurse-sensitive measures, that aligned with organization strategies and metrics allowed the ED to monitor performance in an ongoing and timely manner. The consultant conducted root cause analyses to surface the underlying reasons for patients leaving without treatment and ambulance diversions. Staffing to demand analyses identified opportunities for improving the number of care staff to the bedside, while reducing agency usage. The creation of task forces to improve practices associated with medication administration, admission and discharge criteria, physician orders, wound care, and other care related processes engaged staff and introduced cultural change that further enabled policy, process, and practice changes to occur.

RESULTS

Within six months, the percent of patients who left without being seen decreased from 7.6 to 2.3 percent. The number of hours on diversion declined from 10 hours per month to one. Overall patient visits increased by 3.0 percent. Agency usage decreased by 33 percent. Patient satisfaction increased from 73 to 92 percent.

THE IMA APPROACH

The level of engagement of the consultant into the organization served as a critical success factor in the success of this project. The cross-function participation of other departments (e.g., Radiology, Laboratory) contributed to the overall success. This resulted from the consultant urging involvement by those areas. In addition, the engagement of all stakeholders in the ED's success played a significant role in making the effort successful.