



Meeting demand in the right places, the counter intuitive shift of social work resources

Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital

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Key Problem

- Practice changes in the Emergency Department to meet acute health demands, cost savings and key performance indicators, has impacted on where the social work service should be delivered
- This has been brought about by, the introduction of the
 - 4 hour emergency department rule
 - ED fast track teams
 - Establishment of a new mental health observation ward
 - Emphasis on medical teams 'pulling' patients from ED
 - Social work practice changes related to screening and bereavement support in ED

Aim of this innovation

To

- Shift a session of weekend social work services from the emergency department to the inpatient medical assessment unit, while
 - Maintaining timeliness of the social work service in the emergency department
 - Providing appropriate services to the inpatient cohort
 - Ensuring efficient practice and timely ward discharges
- Reduce service costs while maintaining service provision, by more appropriately targeting of resources

Baseline Data

- 3 months – weekend data, July 1 2016 to 30 September 2016.

2016		
Saturday		
Service Unit	Patients	Time (minutes) per patient
Emergency Department	80	84
Inpatient Medical Assess Unit	60	43
Sunday		
Service Unit	Patients	Time (minutes) per patient
Emergency Department	80	80
Inpatient General Medical Assess Unit	85	39
Total	305	62

Key Changes Implemented

- Decreased social work services in the emergency department on weekends
- Social work resource moved to the inpatient medical assessment ward, where patients are 'pulled' proactively from the Emergency Department
- Emergency department social work staff trained to meet inpatient demands and adjust to a screening and case finding service
- Adoption of Emergency department staff of a proactive model of service, rather than reactive service

Outcomes so far

- Comparison with same three month period in 2017, demonstrated virtually no change in service to the Emergency Department or inpatient medical assessment unit
- Emergency department workers has higher service time per patient than regular medical assessment unit workers
- Emergency department workers demonstrated to have reduced service time per patient in their own service area over the period
- Savings of one weekend social work shift with no change in service to either area of impact

Outcomes so far – no change to services

Service Unit	2016		2017	
	Saturday		Saturday	
	Patients	Time (minutes) per patient	Patients	Time (minutes) per patient
Emergency Department	80	84	77	83
Inpatient General Medical Assess Unit	60	43	66	50
Sub total	140	64	143	67
	Sunday		Sunday	
	Patients	Time (minutes) per patient	Patients	Time (minutes) per patient
Emergency Department	80	80	90	69
Inpatient General Medical Assess Unit	85	39	78	50
Sub total	165	60	168	60
Total	305	62	311	63

Lessons Learnt

- Basic change management skills required
 - ✓ Communicating the rationale for change, supported by data and evidence
 - ✓ Providing support and training
- It is much harder to 'undo' and reconfigure services, than add services
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