

QIO Success Stories: Home Health Care

In 2002, QIOs began working a national basis to help home health agencies evaluate and improve their processes for delivering care. To date, QIOs have trained the vast majority of all Medicare certified home health agencies in the US to collect, analyze, and use information on quality of care to improve clinical processes.

Arkansas

White County Medical Center Home Health, in Arkansas, improves surgical wound care. Working with the Arkansas QIO, Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care, the White County Medical Center Home Health department boosted the percentage of patients showing improvement of surgical wounds to 74% in early 2003 from 56% in 2002. White County established a wound care committee of home care and hospital staff to provide continuity of patient care. The team invited wound care specialists to educate them on available wound care products. After products were selected, the committee established new wound care protocols. Workshops were held to educate staff in home care and their roles in wound healing. These changes required multidisciplinary involvement, quarterly reporting of progress, staff participation, and orientation of new staff as they were hired. Contact AFMC at 479-649-8501.

Maryland

Personal Touch Home Care in Baltimore reduces emergency hospital admissions. Personal Touch Home Care worked with the Delmarva Foundation, the Maryland QIO, to improve processes for monitoring patients' weight gain and for using data to improve care. During 2001, the agency cut the percentage of heart failure patients needing emergency room care from 50% to 17%. Contact Delmarva at 410-822-0697.

Pennsylvania

Columbia Montour Home Health Service in Pennsylvania improves patient mobility. Columbia Montour Home Health Service worked with Quality Insights of Pennsylvania, the state's QIO, to improve care on two key indicators of patient health. Columbia Montour improved its patients' ability to get in and out of bed from 30% in June 2002 (compared to the national average of 49%) to 49.2% in May 2003 (compared to the national average of 46.1%). The agency also improved

its treatment of pain, from 40.1% in Dec. 2002 to 45.7% in May 2003. Contact Quality Insights at 877-346-6180.

Rhode Island

The Cathleen Naughton Home Health Agency, Rhode Island, doubles mobility improvement. Working with Quality Partners of Rhode Island (QPRI), the Rhode Island QIO, the Naughton agency implemented exercise regimens for new patients with difficulty in ambulation and improved monitoring of slower progressing patients through weekly clinical meetings. The result: the agency helped 25% of its patients improve mobility in 2001, compared to 12% previously. The efforts improved care on the targeted indicator to a rate above the national average. Contact QPRI at 401-528-3200.

Virginia

Shore Health Care At Home, Virginia, decreases its acute care hospitalization rate by 19%. Shore Health Care At Home made patient education a key factor in decreasing its acute care hospitalization rate by 19% over a one-year period. These gains followed quality improvement training with the Virginia QIO, Virginia Health Quality Center, and direct technical assistance in the development of an audit tool that included key activities pertaining to patient/family education. Contact VHQC at 804-289-5320.

The American Health Quality Association is dedicated to improving the safety and effectiveness of health care. AHQA represents the national network of Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) that work with hospitals, medical practices, health plans, long-term care facilities, home health agencies, and employers to encourage the spread of best clinical practices and improve systems of care delivery.