

CLINICAL PATHWAY DEVELOPMENT

What is a clinical pathway?

Clinical pathways are standardized, evidence-based interdisciplinary care management plans, which identify an appropriate sequence of clinical interventions, timeframes, milestones and expected outcomes for a comparable patient group, i.e. by diagnosis or surgical procedure.

GETTING STARTED

- Identify patient population that will benefit from a Clinical Pathway. This can be achieved through consideration of:
 - ALOS vs. ELOS
 - High volume cases/admissions
 - Variations in clinical practices (need to standardize practices).
- Obtain commitment and support from Leadership/Clinicians.
- Assemble your interdisciplinary team (consider the entire continuum of care for your particular population). Teams should include physician/ surgeon, the interdisciplinary team and other staff who are involved in the care planning and delivery of care for your patient population.
- Teams should identify key target dates for pathway development and implementation to occur.

DATA REVIEW/BENCHMARKING

- Conduct literature search on diagnosis/procedure/patient population that you wish to develop a pathway for. Information can be collected through journals, texts, guidelines and protocols as well as chart reviews.
- You may conduct telephone surveys with organization that have pathways implemented: request copies of protocols/pathways and all related information so that team can review and utilize in their decision making.

EVALUATE CURRENT PRACTICES

- Review your current care delivery practices; this can be achieved through mapping out the process for your patient population from admission to discharge. It is important to consider all aspects of patient flow through the continuum when mapping, i.e. from the Emergency Department to

inpatient admission and transition back to community or reviewing the preoperative process for the surgical population.

- Complete chart reviews, obtaining information on the current care/management and discharge planning for your population. Discuss with clinical staff in your area to complement information abstracted through chart reviews.

CREATING THE PATHWAY

- Present findings /data to interdisciplinary team: determine LOS and identify key practices that must be incorporated into the pathway.
- Gain consensus from team as to activities/interventions/treatments that will guide the patient through their pathway.
- Establish targets for activities of care (generally grouped by day/phase within any pathway).

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

- Establish outcomes measures/indicators that will be important in measuring progress and success for the pathway population, i.e. LOS, Patient and Staff Satisfaction while considering key outcomes that will be relevant for your particular population.
- Consideration should be given to how outcomes and variances from pathways will be collected, i.e. through documentation on the pathway document or alternate methods.
- Determine frequency of data reporting and identify stakeholder group for dissemination of information.

PHYSICIAN STANDING ORDERS/INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCUMENTATION

- Physician Standing Orders generally support the care within any particular pathway and will assist in the standardization of care for the population. As well, interdisciplinary documentation tools should be reviewed and revised to support pathway practices.

STAFF EDUCATION

- It is important that staff who contribute to care delivery for a patient population are provided with information sessions as to pathway content and utilization as well as providing them with data related to the outcome measurement.

PATIENT EDUCATION

- Review of all patient educational material should be completed and revised accordingly and/or develop new material to complement the pathway.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PATHWAY

- Establish a timeframe for implementation with the intent that the pathway team meet frequently during the initial months to allow for feedback and discussion as to how implementation is going. It is important that the both the pathway team and clinical staff are provided with a venue/resource person should they have questions or feedback during the implementation phase.
- The pathway team should meet more frequently (monthly) during initial implementation. After this time, the team should meet regularly to ensure outcomes/indicators/ data are reviewed.

MAINTENANCE OF PATHWAY

- The team should determine frequency of review for clinical practices related to their patient population and revise pathway to reflect best practice.