Indiana Critical Access Hospitals — Purdue Healthcare Advisors’ Lean training to improve transitions of care

INITIATIVE

Scott Memorial Hospital in Scottsburg, Ind., was among 20 of the state’s Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) to participate in training made possible through funding from the National Rural Health Resource Center’s Flex Programs aimed at enhancing quality and performance improvement. The Indiana Rural Health Association, which manages the Indiana Flex Program, contracted with Purdue Healthcare Advisors to provide CAHs — characterized as small, generally geographically remote facilities that provide outpatient/inpatient hospital services to rural areas — with an introduction to Lean Healthcare. Purdue Healthcare Advisors serves as a division of the Purdue University Technical Assistance Program. While earning Lean certifications through Purdue Healthcare Advisors, team participants within Scott Memorial looked for ways to reduce the average transitions-of-care time from the emergency department to the Med Surg nursing unit. As the team committed to Lean philosophies and methodologies that put the patient first, they discovered that reducing the anxiety experienced by the patient while waiting to be moved from the ED to a regular room trumped reducing interruptions for nurses during shift changes. A team decision was made to remove the no-fly zone, or the time between 6:15 and 7 o’clock in the morning and evening during which no patients could be transported to another unit.

IMPACT

With PHA guidance, the improvement initiatives reduced ED to Med Surg transition time at Scott Memorial by two-thirds. “Patients get anxious waiting to be moved from the emergency department to a regular room. Although the ‘no fly zone’ was used to reduce interruptions for nurses during shift changes, our Lean training revealed that these flow restrictions only served to extend patient time on the ER stretcher,” — Dawn Mays, vice president of nursing, Scott Memorial Hospital

“The kinds of results that some of these CAH teams were able to produce — reducing the average times for patient transfers from emergency department to inpatient by more than 70 percent as well as reducing avoidable inpatient readmissions by more than 40 percent — tell us that Lean healthcare methodologies can be applied successfully throughout the healthcare industry.” — Don Kelso, executive director, Indiana Rural Health Association.