



Emergency Department / Quality Improvement Initiative

Funded by the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health

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The National Quality Forum (NQF) is focusing on quality initiatives that seek to establish a standardized measurement and reporting system of the performance of emergency care providers and systems with the anticipated outcome to effectively improve the care of patients and reduce excessive healthcare costs. The NQF project seeks to identify and endorse measures for public accountability and quality improvement related to emergency care. The focus of Phase 1 is *Measures of Emergency Department Transfers*. In alignment with this, the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health (WORH) will implement a Quality Improvement (QI) initiative to enhance the transfer process of patients between providers. Often times, emergency departments (ED) / emergency rooms (ER) of rural hospitals need to transfer patients to another hospital with greater clinical capabilities.

WORH will contract with Janice M. Lato, FACHE to administer this QI initiative to urban, rural and Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) in Southwestern Wisconsin in 2007-2008. Mrs. Lato and WORH will also work with local partners: Rural Trauma Advisory Council (RTAC) staff, EMS personnel, hospital / emergency room staff, Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA), MetaStar, the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative, etc. to implement this pilot initiative. It is anticipated to implement this initiative statewide, based on the outcome of this initiative.

To enhance the knowledge of personnel involved throughout the transfer process and to focus on standardized reporting mechanisms, the goal is to coordinate the development of and pilot a standardized transfer document. Currently, the process consists of a transfer form designed by each hospital or one that has been designed by the receiving hospital (larger, urban hospitals). There is not standardization of information among rural hospitals and among receiving hospitals at this time.

In effort to accomplish this goal, the initiative will establish a work team of Emergency Department Directors that would identify the best features from the multiple transfer documents, meet the requirements of Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA), and include the emergency transfer measures that have been identified by the NQF. This transfer form would then be piloted among the region's rural and receiving hospitals. From suggestions received during the pilot period, the hospital transfer form would be revised and finalized for further distribution and implementation.

In the initial phase, an assessment will be completed and learning sessions provided on selected topics through teleconferences and various roundtable discussions. The assessment will be conducted with both rural hospital emergency personnel and the



receiving hospital's emergency staff to identify topics that would improve care from one facility to the next. Learning sessions will be held for ER staff of the rural hospitals with written guidelines and best practices provided in writing to post on the WORH's website for future access by those who could not attend or for new ER personnel employed at the facility.

Specific activities that will be conducted during the initiative will include:

- An assessment survey of rural hospitals and receiving hospitals on education needs.
- Two learning sessions.
- Three roundtable meetings with several ED personnel of rural hospitals and ED personnel of receiving hospitals to design a single standardized hospital transfer form, trial it and revise it as needed.
- Two teleconference sessions with an advisory group, including representatives from the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative, MetaStar, and the Wisconsin Hospital Association and other participating or interested partners.
- An evaluation meeting at the end of the initiative to identify lessons learned and ways that the hospital transfer form and education could be utilized and implemented with other regions of the state.

The Emergency Department Quality Improvement initiative will improve the quality of care provided and information communicated during a patient transfer from a rural hospital to a large or tertiary care hospital in Wisconsin.