RN-Physician Rounding a hit with nurses, patients, physicians

By Bethany Schiefelbein, RN, BSN, MA

Nurses, physicians, and patients are improving teamwork and communication at Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital, a 25-bed critical access hospital in southwest Wisconsin.

RNPs and physicians began rounding together to see patients in May, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. RN-Physician Rounding is one endeavor of Prairie du Chien’s participation in Transforming Care at the Bedside (TCAB), a program funded by the Aligning Forces for Quality initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. In Wisconsin, Aligning Forces for Quality is a grant to the Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality, and the Wisconsin Hospital Association works with hospitals across the state on various programs for hospitals.

Prairie du Chien Memorial and 15 other Wisconsin hospitals were selected to participate in TCAB by the Wisconsin Hospital Association in January. The hospitals began their TCAB journey in March at a three-day kickoff education conference. The nursing staff in representation gained the tools and skills necessary to begin the process of transforming patient care at their respective hospital homes.

The TCAB process of change begins with a “Snorkel,” a brainstorming technique that encourages front-line staff to generate as many solutions as possible to any care process challenges they see. Prairie du Chien RN, CNA, and HUC staff thought of over 100 solutions to the six challenge themes we first identified. We then voted on and determined when and how we could pilot the solutions. RN-Physician Rounding was one solution to our “Care Team Communication” challenge that received votes from almost all RNs in attendance at the Snorkel.

I approached the medical staff about the RNs’ desire to round with them. She received a resounding chorus of “Yes!” and even a double thumbs-up. Two of the physicians...
began rounding on their patients with the RNs that day.

Implementing and maintaining RN-Physician Rounding has presented challenges. RNs’ and physicians’ busy morning schedules do not always make coordinating a time to round together easily feasible. An RN might be caring for patients of three different physicians and he or she can’t be in three places at once if the physicians are all present at the same time. Select physicians come to the hospital to see patients at the same time RNs change shifts and are giving one another report. RN shift change was moved earlier to help alleviate this conflict. Finally, as with any change, not all physicians or nurses are enthusiastic about trying something new.

Despite a few bumps along the implementation path, RN-Physician Rounding has been a success. Nurses feel that physicians value and respect their input. Physicians are pleased with fewer non-emergent phone calls and feel that they are better able to meet all patient needs such as pain control and answering family ques-

tions. Patient feedback has been that rounding assures them that nurses and physicians are working together to meet their needs. Changes in HCAHPS scores will be evaluated in the coming months.

“Rounding increases communication, safety, and teamwork, which ultimately lead to better outcomes. It’s the best thing that’s ever happened,” says Dr. Oates, a family practice physician who sees patients at Prairie du Chien Memorial. Deb Smith, RN, says, “It helps me to learn about the patient’s condition and anticipate his or her needs as well as physician orders. Rounding also increases my confidence with talking to the doctors.”

Prairie du Chien’s TCAB team will continue to evaluate RN-Physician Rounding and seek feedback to make the process better. The TCAB team is especially interested in patients’ perception of the rounding and their recommendations for improvements.

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