



ONGOING COLLABORATION BRINGING BIG BENEFITS TO PATIENTS AND HOSPITALS

OAHHS partnership with Allevant has already shown some promising results

By Jon Bell

Salem Health West Valley Hospital, a critical access hospital in Dallas, Oregon, that is part of Salem Health, has had a swing bed program for quite some time. Created by Medicare, the program aims to increase patient access to post-acute, skilled nursing facility-level care in rural hospitals.

Yet when nurse manager Shane Emmert arrived in 2016, the

hospital hadn't had a swing bed patient in more than a year. What's more, the hospital had open beds in its Medical Services Inpatient Unit and had the capacity to accept more patients—but it wasn't.

"I began to ask, 'How can we utilize our capacity to alleviate census challenges at Salem

gains that have happened so far,” said Mark Lindsay, MD, medical director for Allevant. “I’m fired up that Oregon as a state could be an early, best-in-class opportunity for demonstrating the benefit of this model.”

In a nutshell, the Transitional Post-Acute Care program—which is essentially the same as a swing bed program—offers certain services to patients to help them heal and recover after a hospital stay. Patients who have undergone surgery or had a cardiac event may be ready to move out of acute care but aren’t quite ready to return home yet.

In many cases, patients from rural areas need to head to larger urban hospitals for treatment, and because post-acute care services haven’t always been available at CAHs, patients remain in those urban areas for care rather than returning home. Not only does that tie up beds for the large hospitals, but it prevents patients from returning to their own communities, where they can be closer to family, friends, and other amenities that can help them fully recover.

“It’s really nice for the patient to be back in their own community,” said Allison Whisenhunt, manager of the care management department at Providence Seaside Hospital, one of the CAHs enrolled in the program with Allevant. “It’s nice for the caregivers, too.”

Billie Grigoraitis, nurse manager for safety, quality and emergency preparedness at Providence Seaside, said the program with Allevant has not only offered new training, but also helped connect the hospital with others in similar scenarios.

“I think we’ve been able to form something that’s a little more collaborative and that’s made all of our programs a little more unified,” she said.

In addition, Grigoraitis noted that the program could ultimately help hospitals like Providence Seaside and other CAHs stabilize their patient census, which in turn could help keep revenues steadier and more reliable.

“With just acute patients, the numbers go up and down,” she said. “This helps us keep a more even number and a more predictable level.”

Though the program is only just now entering its second year, thus limiting the amount of results that are available, the Allevant team is optimistic in what they’ve seen so far. According to their data, the number of swing bed days increased 33 percent from one six-month baseline period to the next in 2017. In addition, when comparing March and April 2017 to October and November 2017, referrals to CAHs from outside facilities climbed 180 percent.

Moving forward, Lindsay said Allevant will continue marketing the program to bigger hospitals in Oregon so they know about referral options. The team will continue to make improvements based on what’s working well and address the areas that need attention. One example: if a CAH denies a case, Allevant will look into why it was denied and what could be tweaked to achieve a different outcome. Participating hospitals will also have the option of signing on for training in more specific treatment areas, such as tracheostomy.

And even after the three-year program is up at the end of next year, its impacts will likely live on at CAHs through their continued use of the best practices they’ve learned as a result.

“We plan to continue providing this service long-term,” Emmert said. “We are extremely excited about our collaboration with Allevant and plan to use this momentum into the future.” 

Hospital as well as keep more of our patients in the Dallas community?” Emmert said. “As I learned more about the program, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to keep our patients closer to home while opening up beds in Salem for acute care.”

Emmert’s realization happened to coincide with a new collaboration between the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems and Allevant Solutions LLC to establish Transitional Post-Acute Care programs in CAHs around the state. Launched in January 2017, the three-year program has signed up 18 CAHs in Oregon, offering training and education to help them provide post-acute care to recovering patients. The goal: Help patients recover in their home communities while freeing up beds at larger urban hospitals.

“Oregon is a really important project and we’ve been super excited about the