



Optimizing workflow efficiency to streamline the patient experience

Philips and WellSpan York Hospital collaborate to improve patient throughput

Who/where

WellSpan York Hospital, York, Pennsylvania, USA.

Challenge

Redefine a multi-discipline, multi-faceted approach to patient throughput to improve the patient experience, streamline processes, and reduce costs.

Solution

Philips Healthcare Transformation Services led a consulting engagement which focused on three key areas: people and culture, place and space, and process and operation.

WellSpan York Hospital is south central Pennsylvania's leader in advanced specialty care. With ~600 beds and more than 4,400 employees, it serves a population of 520,000+. WellSpan York Hospital is a nationally recognized teaching institution and is home to a Level 1 trauma center. Administrators were aware, however, that barriers to optimal throughput and patient experience during the hospital stay were hindering efficiency.

WellSpan York Hospital engaged Philips to conduct an in-depth assessment of existing processes and provide recommendations for performance improvement opportunities that were effective and sustainable. The results included increased process efficiency, reduced length-of-stay, and cost savings.



Results*

Five workgroups were formed, each of which realized and implemented important improvement initiatives:



74%

decreased time in maximum surge status



35%

improvement in time from bed request to assignment

reduction in geometric mean length-of-stay which supported a

\$1.7m

cost savings over 3 months

The challenge

WellSpan York Hospital asked Philips consultants to assess current processes and help implement effective and sustainable change for improved patient throughput. The expectation was to make improvements on all aspects of patient flow through the hospital, from arrival, through the stay, until the patient is discharged. The goal was to manage untapped capacity, define strategies for implementation, and assure buy-in from involved stakeholders.

Assessing the situation

Philips consultants spent several weeks reviewing and assessing existing processes. The assessment methodology included review of hospital data, interviews with key stakeholders, observations of patient flow, departmental processes, and communications among the teams.

The consultants identified opportunities for performance improvement which were segmented into five distinct areas: patient access, patient placement, patient care facilitation, patient support, and patient discharge.

Upon completion of the formal assessment and presentation to hospital leadership, WellSpan York Hospital and Philips agreed to a 45-week consulting engagement for help with implementation of the improvement recommendations.

Team-based approach

An experienced consultant was assigned to work onsite with WellSpan staff as the leader of the patient throughput project. Due to the complexity and scale of the project, five workgroups (teams) were established.

Each workgroup was guided by the consultant, had its own specific set of deliverables, and was regularly monitored by a steering committee to make certain they remained on track.

Workgroups had multidisciplinary representation, with participating members from hospital departments that would be directly affected by performance improvement initiatives – this included physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, techs, EVS, transporters, infection control, and more.

As the project progressed and improvement initiatives were defined and implemented, data was used to ensure each group had continual positive momentum.

Workgroups were formed with team leaders assigned

Capacity management

The team redesigned the bed huddle to occur twice daily, include additional key stakeholders, and focus on the elimination of current and future capacity constraints.

This increased transparency and focus helped decrease time in maximum surge status by 74%.

Logistics

This workgroup created a centralized command center to house the bed placement staff, environmental services dispatcher, and transport dispatcher in a central location. **Improved collaboration helped reduce time from bed request to assignment by 35%.**

Patient care facilitation

This team improved the elapsed time from printing the after-visit summary (AVS) to departure and developed and implemented standardized multidisciplinary rounds (MDRs) on all medical-surgical nursing units.

Expedited discharge tasks improved time from AVS to departure by 24%.

Patient placement

This workgroup created new handoff processes for patients being admitted from the ED, **reducing transfer time and enhancing the patient experience.**

Patient support

This team focused on improving the efficiency of environmental services (EVS) and patient transport. They created a scorecard for both departments and defined baseline goals to improve and ensure quality.

Transport turnaround time improved by 16%.

Overall impact

Increased transparency, communication, and collaboration helped the multidisciplinary teams gain a better understanding of the bed capacity issues and how to address them across the hospital. Of the initiatives undertaken, two stand out as key to the overall success of the project. Multidisciplinary rounds have contributed to a more precise understanding of the state of care for each patient and their expected course to discharge. This, in turn, translates to more efficient patient throughput. The twice daily huddles also allow staff to gain a better idea of expected bed capacity and how to handle inevitable fluctuations. Together, these bring a fresh perspective to the WellSpan York Hospital staff with tools to sustain continued progress.

An important and telling analysis done at the close of the engagement was the 'Days in excess of geometric mean length of stay (GMLOS)', a CMS method of calculating the LOS to help reduce the effects of outliers. In the case of WellSpan York Hospital, the GMLOS was reduced between February of 2019 and March of 2020.

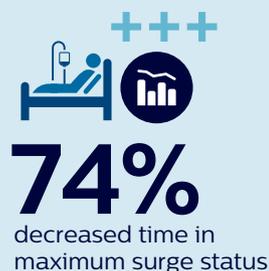
This reduction in GMLOS translated into a cost savings for the hospital of \$1.7M dollars in 3 months.

“The Philips consultant has done an exceptional job of helping us get on the right track. We still have some work to do to continue to sustain the progress, but we are moving in the right direction. And, the financial impact will be significant.”

Kristen O'Shea, Chief Nursing Officer, WellSpan York Hospital

Results*

41 weeks into the engagement, the COVID-19 pandemic brought a pause to the project as the WellSpan York Hospital team focused on their local response. While many of the initiatives already showed demonstrable success, the final quantitative set of data was not quite complete. When the consultant was invited back to finish the project, the final initiatives were reviewed and completed per the below results. Going forward, Philips will continue to guide the WellSpan York Hospital staff with check-in points of 6, 12, and 18 months. This offers the hospital an opportunity to continue to sustain positive patient throughput improvements.



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Learn more

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