

Chicago Hospital News[®] and HEALTHCARE REPORT

THE REGION'S MONTHLY NEWSPAPER FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS & PHYSICIANS

The Alden Network Rehabilitation Centers and Hospitals: Building High Performance Partnerships



The state-of-the-art Therapy Gym at Alden Estates of Skokie offers patients physical, occupational and speech therapies daily to increase optimal rehabilitation outcomes and help individuals get back on their feet and home as quickly and safely as possible.

BY LISA BIANCO

These days, every rehabilitation, nursing and acute care facility serving high-risk Medicare beneficiaries is aware that April 2011's launch of Partnership for Patients—part of the Affordable Care Act—mandated a nationwide initiative to make patient care safer and to support effective transitions of patients from hospitals to other care settings such as rehabilitation centers. The initiative's primary goal is reducing hospital readmissions. Alden is primed to be a preferred partner as it leads the way with strategic, proactive approaches.

Proactive Approach Tracks CMS Core Measures and Alden's Outcomes

The prevailing belief is that partnerships between hospitals and post-acute care providers like Alden are going to become the new norm in the delivery of health care. For Alden and other rehabilitation centers, outcomes will be crucial.

"We realized a year ago when the Affordable Care Act was implemented that we should get ahead of the curve, and

started tracking and improving our outcomes," said Robert Molitor, Chief Operating Officer, The Alden Network. "We knew in 2011 that the way to partner with hospitals would be to show them solid outcomes and minimal bouncebacks into the hospital within the 30-day timeframe."

As a result, Alden facilities, today accounting for 34 rehabilitation centers throughout Chicago and the suburbs, now average a very low Return to Hospital (RTH) rate of 0-5 percent on the CMS Core Measures, which include Congestive Heart Failure (CHF); Acute MI; and Pneumonia. By comparison, the National RTH Average for Heart Failure patients is 24.6 percent, while patients diagnosed with Acute MI have an average RTH nationwide of 19.9 percent. Those with Pneumonia have an RTH of 18.2 percent.

Advancing Technology and Training for Better Patient Care

Alden's strategic approach includes a combination of updated technology, newly implemented patient monitoring procedures and a Post-Acute Care Service Model that's training intensive.

Electronic Medical Records (EMR)

Esther Davis, Alden's Vice President of Operations reports, "Alden's rehabilitation and health care centers recently made the switch from paper to computers to track patients' care. The advantages range from enhancing quality of care and safety to improving the consistency and accuracy of documentation."

One hospital system in the Chicago area has already taken advantage of the technology by having its system interface with Alden's EMR. Those hospital physicians and advance practice nurses can remotely access their patient charts as well as order medications and tests.

"Although it took nearly a year for all of our facilities to implement the EMR system, it was time well spent," affirmed Robert Molitor. "Each of our 34 rehabilitation centers can track billings and reimbursements and can improve and streamline regulatory compliance, improve charge capture and reduce time spent charting. And, our nurses can spend more time with patients."

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Stop & Watch Tool

Hourly, nurses at Alden rehabilitation centers make rounds on short-term post-acute patients and complete a checklist that monitors changes in conditions related to dehydration, fever, mental status changes, CHF, UTI and lower respiratory infection. If nurses observe a change, they have four pre-established treatment protocols ready to be utilized, including Clinical Pathways based on CMS guidelines.

Post-Acute Care Programs

Alden's Post-Acute Care Service Model focuses on short-term post-acute patients requiring Orthopedic, Cardiac, Neurological and Pulmonary care and services. The model has a 30-day re-hospitalization prevention program built into it.

Staff Training

Under this Service Model, all staff—from dietitians and housekeepers to nurses and therapists—must undergo intensive training in post-acute protocols and specific care plans. Alden partnered with Mayo Clinic nurses to develop the training program, which includes education on treating patients with various post-acute diagnoses.

In addition, Alden nurses are required to receive between 6-8 hours of additional classroom training, including post-tests and bedside training.

Nursing Requirements

Given the higher acuity level of post-acute patients, nurses in the rehabilitation setting must be more effective and efficient. They must also be able to collaborate with physicians, conduct assessments, frequently monitor signs and symptoms and provide early interventions

if necessary.

“Post-Acute Care Nurses need to be more acutely skilled and knowledgeable in meeting our short-term patients’ needs,” Esther Davis observes.

Transition Care Units

“The old term TCU is making a comeback. TCUs are special sections in a building designated for short-term post-acute patients,” Molitor reports. “The benefits of a TCU include a distinctive unit that is set apart with a consistent nursing team that has undergone specialized training on post-acute conditions. Physical, occupational and speech therapies are nearby.”

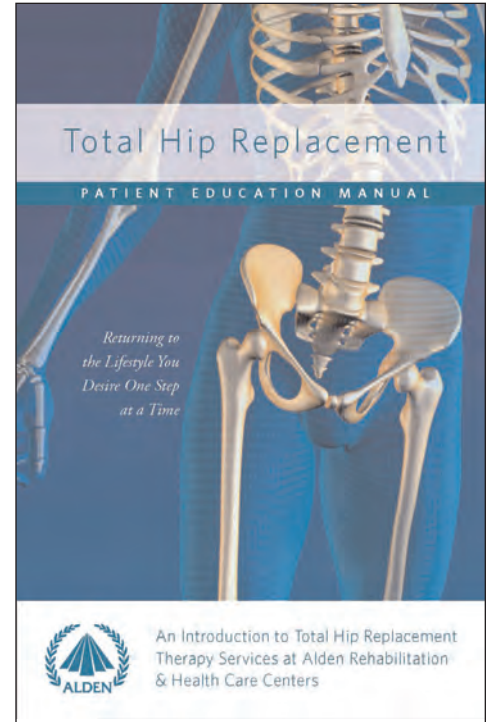
The Goal

In the past year, Alden has spent millions of dollars on technology, training and implementing new programs and services that position it at the forefront of a new era in healthcare. Administrators and Directors of Nursing at Alden rehabilitation centers have begun meeting with hospital leaders to share results and outcomes in the areas of re-admissions and CMS Core Measures.

“We’re the first on the block to develop these measures while some companies are only taking baby steps in this direction,” Molitor remarks. “We have the technology, training and tracking in place to provide the right level of care.”

Esther Davis sees the long-term implications for nursing and rehabilitation facilities. “Hospital systems look at facilities that can produce low readmission rates that meet the Affordable Care Act’s requirements. You won’t be a preferred provider for long if you can’t accomplish that, and your referrals will most likely diminish.”

To learn more about The Alden Network, visit the website www.thealdennetwork.com, or contact Victoria Wolpoff, VP Marketing Communications and Public Relations, at victoria.wolpoff@thealdennetwork.com.



Alden's Hip Replacement Patient Education Manual provides information about therapy services for patients requiring therapy services following hip replacement surgery.

DC WITHIN 30 DAYS OF ADMISSION	RETURN TO HOSPITAL PERCENTAGES	CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE	ACUTE MI	PNEUMONIA
0	0%	0%	0%	0%
US National Averages	19.6%	24.6%	19.9%	18.2%

"Compliance and clinical success all come together at Alden Lincoln Park, thanks to a well-trained and prompt staff."
Mauroo Conzalez, MD — Medical Director

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Alden rehabilitation centers such as Alden Lincoln Park in Chicago track and report hospital data on a monthly basis to area hospitals and health care providers.