

Performance Improvement

When Seconds Count...
Deploy Rapid Response Team

2005 - 2006

St. Francis Hospital
Columbus, Georgia

Executive Summary
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Deploy Rapid Response Team

In response to a GHA report of our hospital's "Failure to Rescue" rate, which showed our performance to be less-than-desired, and after reviewing the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's 100,000 Lives Campaign initiative, our hospital made the decision to establish a Rapid Response Team. Expected outcomes included decreased patient mortality and improved recognition and management of potentially life-threatening patient complications.

A multidisciplinary group of committed and passionate individuals created and implemented a comprehensive process for deployment of a Rapid Response Team. The group reviewed best practice information from many organizations, developed a protocol and measurable indicators, and involved and prepared disciplines at all levels of patient care. The first Rapid Response Team was activated on July 31, 2005. Although our first experience was somewhat uncoordinated, today, the Rapid Response Team responds quickly and directly to potential patient crises at St. Francis Hospital. To date, a total of 104 Rapid Response Teams have been activated, with the activation rate showing a slow, but steady increase.

Significant patient results to date include a decrease in our mortality index from 0.96 in the two quarters before implementation to 0.925 in the two quarters after implementation. A further decrease in the mortality index was seen in the first quarter of 2006 to 0.87. In addition, the percentage of "Code Blues" that occur outside the critical care unit has decreased from 51.2% before implementation to 40.8% after implementation. We have seen a modest 1.66% increase in the percentage of code patients alive at discharge, however this equates to an additional 3 lives saved.

One early lesson learned was the nurses' appreciation for having the extra help in evaluating the patient and making decisions about whether the patient needs to be transferred to a higher level of care. There is an increased confidence in our nursing staff and a growing awareness that patients can safely transfer out of the critical care units, as a highly skilled support system is readily available to the bedside nurse. Responses received after surveying nurses were positive. 82% of the nurses surveyed said compared to one year ago they would be more likely to call the Rapid Response Team. 91% indicated they feel empowered to activate the Rapid Response team. 73% indicated they felt the response time of the Rapid Response Team was adequate, and 82% were of the opinion the Rapid Response Team was helpful to them in their practice.

Although the hospital has introduced other interventions that may have impacted our mortality rate, experiences at other hospitals confirm our experience that rapid response teams are saving lives. The formation of the Rapid Response Team has also been a cultural change for our organization and future plans include empowering families to active the Rapid Response Team. Credit for the success of the team is due to the commitment of team members to achieve maximum patient outcomes. When seconds count, our biggest contribution to our patients may be what did NOT happen to them.