OVERLAYING GERIATIC PRINCIPLES WITHIN A DISEASE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE: NORTHEAST HOSPITALS’ GERIATRIC INITIATIVE

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PROBLEM: Widening scope of established and successful NICHE program to system-wide dimensions without impeding disease management approaches.

SOLUTION: Multi-tiered leadership team champions adoption of best practices in geriatric care system-wide via interdisciplinary collaboration.

Problem Identified Identifying the specialized needs of geriatric inpatients was the easiest step in Northeast Hospitals’ Geriatric Initiative. Navigating through a 300-bed, multi-site, acute hospital system was the leadership challenge. Three years after opening, the NICHE Designated Senior Adult Unit (SAU) had become the system’s “Geriatric Center of Excellence.” The SAU achieved measurable successes as demonstrated by Press Ganey patient satisfaction scores consistently over the 90th percentile, employee satisfaction scores over 90%, falls cut by 50% and financial stability. With this solid platform in place, the new challenge was system-wide implementation of NICHE best practices without disruption of the disease management structure.
**Solution Formulated** The system-wide Geriatric Initiative was launched in 2008. Unlike a typical top-down directive, this mission required adoption of a change paradigm that began at the bedside and culminated in the boardroom — using existing resources and the NICHE Program as the framework. The original interdisciplinary SAU management team of Administrator-Physician-Nurse championed adoption of best practices in geriatric care system-wide.

Interdivisional and interdisciplinary collaboration created by the use of the multi-tiered leadership team laid the foundation for the Geriatric Initiative. This team includes the Director of Nursing Practice Quality and Education, Cheryl Merrill, and Director of Acute Care Services, Fay Curtis, and the reallocation of resources to create the position of system-wide Clinical Geriatric Educator, filled by Sara Barnum, RN BC, MS, who has been instrumental in the system’s success. The transformation was solidified by the achievement of system-wide NICHE designation in 2009.

**NICHE Role** NICHE offers Organizational Strategies in a series of toolkits designed to assist hospitals in securing financial and organizational support for the NICHE program. The toolkits provide guidance in the development of key initiatives within the organization that will ensure continuing improvement and sustained growth in the geriatric care area. Another resource — the NICHE Planning and Implementation Guide — outlines the process for full implementation of NICHE in an acute care setting. This key document details a variety of approaches for adaptation of NICHE models to individual needs and circumstances.

**Evaluation/Results** Integration of geriatric care principles was achieved through interdisciplinary and interdivisional collaboration and without impeding disease management approaches. Most recent practice improvements include:

- Under the leadership of Fay Curtis, Director of Acute (M/S) Care Services, the establishment of a ten bed Geri-Suite on a busy medical floor which has demonstrated successes in decreasing: LOS, Pressure Ulcers, Falls and initial discharges to SNF’s while increasing discharges to home. Daily Interdisciplinary Nursing Lead Rounds were initiated with the opening of the suite and are now conducted (spread) on all med surg floors. Staff prepared for the opening by attending the system’s 2-Day GRN and CA classes, shadowing staff at the Senior Adult Unit and by having the leadership team of Fay Curtis, Nurse Manager Candace Sklarz, RN, and Clinical Coordinator Carole Hickey, RN, attend the NICHE conference in Baltimore.

- NICHE Educational Programs have included:
  - Over 200 RN’s, social workers and rehabilitation staff completed a two-day NICHE-GRN Education Session (five sessions provided year-to-date).
  - NICHE Geri CA classes 2-day seminars
  - Over 80 physicians, nurses and social workers attended a daylong seminar in 2010 dealing with Healthy Aging – a collaborative presentation with the MA DPH.
  - “The 4th D” Drug and Alcohol Addiction in the Older Adult – presentation – a collaborative meeting with the National Gerontological Nurses Association Boston Area Chapter (scheduled as a NICHE webinar for October 2011)

- Finally, to help measure improvements and plan for future endeavors, the team recently re-conducted NICHE’s GIAP during April 2011. It was exciting to review improved results over those received in 2008!

**For more information**


**NICHE-related resources**


**About NICHE**

NICHE (Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders) is an international program designed to help hospitals improve the care of older adults. The vision of NICHE is for all patients 65-and-over to be given sensitive and exemplary care. The mission of NICHE is to provide principles and tools to stimulate a change in the culture of health care facilities to achieve patient-centered care for older adults. NICHE, based at NYU College of Nursing, comprises hospitals and health systems located in 46 states, Canada, and Bermuda. For more information visit nicheprogram.org.