

Title: Involuntary Patient Discharge: A Multi-Network Survey
Author(s): Network 11 and Network 14

Description/Background:

The issue of involuntarily discharged patients in the dialysis clinic is perceived by the Networks and the ESRD community as a growing problem; however there is little data to indicate the scope of the problem. At the March 2002 CMS/Forum of ESRD Networks' Annual meeting, a plenary session was held to discuss challenging patient situations and involuntarily discharged patients. In addition, a workgroup of Network representatives (chaired by Richard Goldman, MD) and CMS representatives (chaired by Eugene Freund, MD) concluded that in order for the Networks and CMS to begin to understand this problem, two important tasks would need to be completed.

1. Create a mechanism for quantifying the problem
2. Establish taxonomy and obtain consensus to describe the problem.

A quality improvement opportunity exists for the ESRD Network system to describe the number and characteristics of patients who are involuntarily discharged from the outpatient dialysis setting.

Purpose & Goals

- To quantify the number of chronic dialysis patients involuntarily discharged in a given region for a specified time period
- To describe the characteristics of dialysis patients involuntarily discharged
- To gain an understanding of the reason(s) patients are being involuntarily discharged from the dialysis clinic setting
- To identify the placement outcome for the involuntarily discharged patient

Methodology

The survey tool was designed using information from data collection efforts piloted previously by Networks 11 and 14. All 18 ESRD Networks were invited, and the following twelve Networks volunteered to participate: Networks 1,3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11,12,14,18. Each participating Network distributed the survey to its renal social workers. The instructions directed the social worker to refer to the patient's medical record to complete the survey. The 9-question survey was distributed to approximately 2,889 dialysis clinics that provide care for approximately 202,000 patients.¹ The survey population includes 71% of the dialysis facilities and dialysis patients in the United States. The survey data was linked with demographic data from SIMS.

Preliminary Findings

The survey response rate was 94%. There were 458 dialysis patients involuntarily discharged, and this represents 0.2% of the population surveyed. Of the 458 discharges, 161 (35.2 %) were preceded by a sudden event. Noncompliance (25.5%), verbal threat (8.5%), and lack of payment (7.6%) were the top three reasons for discharge. Patients were discharged by the facility and MD 190 times (41.4%), by the facility 142 times (31%), and by the MD 122 times (26.6%). Of the 458 discharges, 249 (54.4%) were given a 30-day notice, and 131 (28.6%) were discharged immediately.

Efforts to place discharged patients included providing a list of facilities and contacting other facilities (29.5%), providing a list of facilities (28.4%), and contacting other facilities (18.6%). 5% of patients discharged were provided with no placement efforts by the discharging facility. Discharged patients were placed in another facility (50%), used the ER for dialysis (21.8%), and had an unknown placement outcome (20.1%).

Recommendations

1. Share blinded, Network-specific findings with the participating Networks
2. Share aggregate findings with CMS and the renal community
3. Report findings to the National Consensus Conference Workgroup
4. Compile any follow up activities as recommended by CMS and Network Medical Review Boards
5. Continue to analyze the data

¹ ESRD Program Management and Medical Information System-2001 Facility Survey Tables