

Adopting Patient-centred Care Improves Quality of Patient Care and Cost Efficiency

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Abstract

- Patient-centred care improves the quality of care as well as cost efficiency.
- Clinical Pathways are recognised as a tool that can assist in the provision of outcome based patient care.
- Financial management in the health industry can be assisted by the use of Clinical Pathways which can drive cost efficiency whilst maintaining a focus on the best possible patient outcomes from a clinical perspective.
- Length of Stay (LOS) is a key element in the management of cost and patient care.
- Real time variance analysis with the use of information systems and Clinical Pathways will assist with cost whilst maintaining high quality patient care.
- Clinical Information systems can assist in the development and management of Clinical Pathways
- Clinical Risk Management can be greatly enhanced with high quality data in a format that is easy to use.
- Knowledge management is an important factor for the provision of high quality patient care
- Patient-centred systems will optimize patient care and through this will assist in the efficient management of costs.

Introduction

Cost effective patient care can be a reality

Working in the Health industry today has many challenges, one of the greatest is to provide cost effective patient care. Dollars are important in any business but within health there is an even more important consideration “the patient”. So how can we meet the needs of both aspects within health? Clinical Pathways is one way of managing the needs of the patient by providing outcome driven care modules to ensure that the patient receives the very best of care. Information Systems within the health industry have become very popular to assist in the tracking of dollars. They also have a part to play in the management of clinical data to ensure the provision of best practice, outcome based patient care.

An Information System needs to cater for both aspects; outcome based patient care and the ability to draw data for financial information. An Information System has to have the ability to develop and manage Clinical Pathways that are outcome based and have best practice principles applied whilst also providing data to assist in the management of Length of Stay. Information Systems can also assist in the Clinical Risk Management strategy within an organisation by collating data that can then be used in conjunction with adverse effect analysis to identify risks that require addressing. Information Systems provide a sound foundation for knowledge management within an organisation.

Length of Stay

Within today’s health industry there is a strong focus on length of stay particularly within the private health industry where the Health Funds now pay per episode rather than per diem. So how can a Clinical Pathway assist in the length of stay for patient groups? A Clinical pathway is a road map for the average patient who has been admitted to hospital for an episode of care and is a tool that is used to achieve coordinated care of a patient with desired outcomes within a specific time frame (Audimoolan, S etal 2005 pg 2). There is some concern for the loss of individual care so the Clinical Pathway needs to be flexible enough to address co morbidities and other individual aspects of patient care. Dowsey etal concluded within their research into Clinical

Length of stay can be managed in a way to meet patient outcomes and meet budget needs

Pathways in hip and knee arthroplasty that co morbidities should not exclude patients from Clinical Pathways and that the patient with co morbidities may actually be served better due to greater fastidiousness and vigilance imposed when using Clinical Pathways (Dowsey, M etal 1999 pg 63). Some people may argue that having a structured length of stay may not be in the best interest of all patients and that patients may be discharged from hospital too early just so that the length of stay is maintained.

There is little research to be found on the impact that reduced length of stay has on particular patient care groups however Dowsey etal in their research identified that the length of stay was significantly shorter for the pathway group than the control group and noted that the reduced length of stay did not increase readmission rates or complication rates (Dowsey, M etal 1999 pg 63). Having an Information System that has set length of stay for patient groups but the flexibility to allow co morbidities to be addressed would be of great benefit to any health organisation.

Clinical Pathways

Clinical Pathways Can be time consuming to write

Effective leadership and development of team skills will overcome this

Clinical Pathways have been around for many years now but have been underutilised in many instances. Generally this is due to the length of time that it takes to analyse the effectiveness of the pathway and the time consuming manner in which all members of the multi disciplinary team have to be consulted in the development of the pathway. For Clinical Pathways to be used to their full potential it is important for an organisation to commit time for the development phase. The development of a sustainable evidence based practice requires effective leadership, the development of team skills and an organisational structure to support the multi disciplinary interaction (Ferry, C etal 2004 pg S92). An Information System with a simple, clear and user friendly approach will assist greatly in the development phase of the Clinical Pathways being implemented into an organisation. With these three basic principles the documentation for the Clinical Pathways can be developed and will be more likely to be embraced within the organisation.

Once the pathway is developed the organisation should then have champions identified who will assist in the successful implementation of the pathways within the specific areas that

they are being introduced. There is a significant commitment that has to be made for the development of the Clinical Pathways but once completed; an information system can assist greatly in the ongoing management of the Clinical Pathways to ensure that the data is up to date and of benefit to the organisation. Information systems that provide timely variance analysis of the Clinical Pathways will assist greatly in the best practice model to ensure that the pathway is as current as possible. Health care is perhaps the most important industry for the best possible timely and accurate information to be available (Simpson R 2003, pg 359).

Variance Analysis

Variance analysis is traditionally time consuming and labour intensive.

Using an information system there is the potential for real time variance analysis which is quick and offers immediate data.

Variance analysis is traditionally a very time consuming and labour intensive procedure that is generally completed by a senior nursing position. With the use of an effective Information System to provide real time variance analysis there is the freeing up of the individual to spend time making decisions regarding the changes that need to be made from the highlighted variances. Also by having real time variance analysis there is the potential to recognise the need for an individual's care to be modified immediately that can save the patient unnecessary procedures or an extended length of stay in hospital. With the use of an Information System to manage the Clinical Pathway it is also possible to identify and clarify clinical processes by ensuring continuity of care and reducing unnecessary variances (Audimoolam, M etal 2005 pg 2).

Real time variance analysis allows the organisation to recognise any potential changes to the Clinical Pathway immediately. Once these changes are recognised then an implementation of care changes can take place thus ensuring cost effective patient care. This assists in the provision of high quality patient care whilst meeting the financial needs of the organisation by maintaining an effective length of stay. One of the valuable subsidiaries of Clinical Pathways is that they provide information that can assist in the financial costing of patient episodes. Although a focus on the financial impact on the organisation is important, Clinical Pathways must have the driving force of the need to improve the quality of care and patient outcomes to be truly effective (Dowsey, M 2004, pg 63).

Response to an adverse incident can be prompt due to accurate and timely data collection

Clinical Risk Management

The concept of Clinical Risk Management refers to the systems in place to prevent the reoccurrence of untoward events. Clinical Risk Management involves the analysis of data including variances from Clinical Pathways and adverse incidents. Clinical Risk Management can also be utilised when developing Clinical Pathways as current practice is reviewed and best practice principles are applied when developing the document. Traditionally Clinical Risk Management data collection is done via retrospective documentation review and alerts with incident reporting. This is a time consuming process that can impact on the ability of the organisation to respond in a reasonable time frame to reduce the chance of further adverse outcomes. Clinical Risk Management is made easier with an Information System that provides high quality data in a format that is easy to use so that the necessary people within the organisation can address the issue at hand in a timely manner, particularly if there has been an adverse outcome.

Is the management of knowledge a priority in your organization?

Information systems can ensure that staff has access to the same data throughout the organization.

Knowledge Management

Knowledge management is another key factor to the provision of effective patient care. There may be many people within your organisation that have extensive knowledge to share with colleagues and patients alike. How is that knowledge disseminated within the organisation? Is there a structured approach to knowledge management within your organisation? Informatics plays a role in the delivery of knowledge and data and tools for decision analysis that includes consideration of subjective values (Ozbolt, J 1999 pg 370). Knowledge management is furthermore the evaluation of data that is collated and then the dissemination of the information through out the organisation. Information Systems can assist with knowledge management in many ways, primarily they can be used for the user friendly formatting of data that is of a high standard to ensure that the decisions being made meet the needs of the patient whilst also having a financial benefit to the organisation.

Point of care knowledge is the most timely and efficient form of knowledge that can assist in the performance and success of an organisation (Audimoolam, S etal 2005 pg 7). Using the staff that is providing the care of the patient to assist in the knowledge management within an organisation is perhaps one of the most efficient ways of providing up to date information. It is the carers at the bedside who can recognise a variance in the patient's care the quickest and having a system in place to recognise this knowledge promptly is a way of maintaining real time variance analysis.

Clinical Management System

e-Care has a comprehensive Clinical Pathway module

The standards data base has best practice principles applied

Real time variance analysis is a reality

One such solution is e-Care, which is very easy to use for all levels of staff ensuring that the data input at ward level is accurate; this information is the building block for all further data that is going to be scrutinised. e-Care has a comprehensive Clinical Pathway building tool that is both easy to use and provides standardised data throughout your whole organisation. With the use of a standards database to ensure that the information being used to formulate care plans and Clinical Pathways there is uniformity that can be applied across the whole organisation. The standards database is maintained by the clinicians within the organisation who have best practice principles in place. There is a very handy link that can be utilised by junior or new staff to references that assist the clinical staff in the decision making process when planning the patients care. This link can be used to link into an online procedure folder or to an external reference if appropriate for the organisation.

Variance analysis can be time consuming and labour intensive, with e-Care variance data collection is easy and time efficient. e-Care will assist in creating more productive time to analyse the data thus providing real time variance analysis. With real time variance analysis the identification of potential negative situations for the patient can be identified earlier. Furthermore with real time variance analysis there is the ability to address any length of stay issues in a timely manner thus saving the patient unnecessary time in hospital and assisting the organisation with the financial management of that patient group.

Large report portfolio that has an extensive data range

e-Care has a comprehensive report creation tool that can be utilised for any number of reports that the organisation may require. Currently e-Care has a portfolio of 30 plus reports that has been developed to include information about patient care both clinically and financially. The use of a comprehensive report is invaluable for all members of the health care organisation team from the ward managers to the Chief Executive Officer. With reports that provide real data that is of sound basis, decisions can be made organisation wide to assist in the provision of high quality, cost effective patient care. We know that the data entered into e-Care is of a sound basis because the system is so easy to use for the front end users, reducing the chance of data corruption and the standards data base has been built on best practice principles.

Conclusion

e-Care is an Information System that has been developed by clinicians for use by clinical staff as well as executive teams

In conclusion Clinical Pathways are well recognised as a tool that can assist in the provision of outcome based cost effective patient care. Information Systems can assist in the management of the Clinical Pathway development and implementation into an organisation by providing an approach that is easy to use and provides relevant data. e-Care is an Information System that has been developed by clinicians for use by clinical staff as well as executive teams; it provides an easy to use approach for the front end users. e-Care has an excellent Clinical Pathway building tool that will greatly assist any organisation in the management of patient care in a cost effective manner whilst maintaining a high standard of patient care.

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