Reducing Hospital Readmissions: RNs Manage Medications, Care Transitions

INDUSTRY PULSE FROM THE HEALTHCARE INTELLIGENCE NETWORK™
Results of HIN monthly e-survey on trends shaping the healthcare industry.

Executive Summary

Public and private payors are sharpening their focus on and realigning reimbursement with hospital readmission rates, particularly among Medicare patients with heart attack, heart failure and pneumonia. Private health plans are following the lead of CMS, which posts these rates on its Hospital Compare Web site (www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov). A growing awareness of the potential healthcare savings achievable through hospital readmission rate reductions have led most healthcare organizations to take a hard look at readmission rates and implement programs to reduce these rates.

In its November 2009 Reducing Hospital Readmissions e-survey, the Healthcare Intelligence Network set out to identify the rudiments of readmission reduction efforts in the healthcare industry, from target populations and conditions to responsibilities, roles and ROI. Through responses provided by 107 healthcare organizations to 19 multiple choice and open-ended questions, the survey results reveal an industry in tune with readmission trends, committed to reducing avoidable readmissions in its most vulnerable populations and anxious to coordinate efforts with payors and providers across the healthcare continuum.

Survey Highlights

✓ More than two-thirds — 69.5 percent — of respondents have created specific programs that seek to reduce hospital readmission rates.

✓ The majority of respondents — 45.3 percent — are working to reduce readmissions across all populations with their readmission reduction efforts, while 41.5 percent say Medicare beneficiaries are the individuals most often targeted by these programs.

✓ More than three-quarters of respondents — 77.6 percent — direct efforts at patients or members diagnosed with heart failure.

✓ Risk stratification is used by more than half of respondents — 53.7 percent — to identify patients most at risk for returning to the hospital.

✓ Healthcare case management to prevent readmissions is utilized by 66 percent of respondents.

✓ Reviewing medication plans with patients about to be discharged is the most prevalent activity at hospital discharge, say 71.1 percent of respondents.

✓ Cost is the greatest barrier to launching a program to reduce readmissions, according to 41 percent of respondents with no formal program to rerehospitalizations.
Key Findings

- **Prevalence and Targets of Readmission Reduction Programs:**
  - Of those respondents with no readmission reduction program in place, about two-fifths (40.6 percent) say they'll launch a program targeting hospital readmissions in the next 12 months.
  - Following heart failure, readmission reduction efforts are most often aimed at patients suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (71.4 percent), cardiovascular disease (67.3 percent) and stroke (46.9 percent).
  - After Medicare beneficiaries, readmission reduction programs are most often aimed at commercial populations (24.5 percent) and the frail elderly (22.6 percent).

- **Readmission Strategies and Tools:**
  - Beyond risk stratification, responding healthcare organizations mine data from health claims (51.9 percent) and patient charts (46.3 percent) to identify those individuals most likely to be readmitted to the hospital.
  - Tighter management of care transitions by 62.3 percent of respondents is closely aligned with case management efforts as part of an overall readmission reduction strategy.
  - A review of discharge instructions with hospitalized patients is conducted by 68.9 percent of respondents.
  - A registered nurse has primary responsibility for tasks related to reducing hospital readmissions in 41.7 percent of respondents’ programs.

- **Impact and ROI from Efforts to Reduce Readmissions:**
  - Almost a quarter of respondents — 24.5 percent — say their programs have reduced readmissions by 10 to 25 percent.
  - Of 48 organizations who answered the question, almost half — 45.8 percent — report that their current reimbursement agreement reduces payments for readmissions within 30 days.
  - Factors related to medication adherence and access to primary care pose equal barriers to reducing readmission rates in their populations, say 23.8 percent of respondents.

**About the Survey**

The Reducing Hospital Readmissions survey was administered in November 2009 via the Healthcare Intelligence Network Web site at [http://www.hin.com](http://www.hin.com). Respondents were invited to take the survey via e-mail, e-newsletter and social networking reminders throughout the month. A total of 107 healthcare organizations responded to the survey. The survey included 19 separate questions, with multiple responses possible on some questions. Some of the questions were open-ended, inviting participants to write in their responses. Not all surveys were fully completed. Survey results were compiled by the Healthcare Intelligence Network.
About the Healthcare Intelligence Network

The Healthcare Intelligence Network (HIN) is an electronic publishing company providing high-quality information on the business of healthcare. In one place, healthcare executives can receive exclusive, customized up-to-the minute information in five key areas: the healthcare and managed care industry, hospital and health system management, health law and regulation, behavioral healthcare and long-term care.

Related Resource

Need more detail on this survey? As many payors begin to tie reimbursement to hospital readmission data, *Benchmarks in Reducing Hospital Readmissions* provides actionable information from 107 healthcare organizations on their efforts to reduce avoidable readmissions in their most vulnerable and highest-utilization populations. This 50-page resource provides metrics and measures on current and planned initiatives as well as lessons learned and results from early adopters of readmission reduction strategies. With hospital readmission trends under the microscope in healthcare reform, organizations will benefit from a review of these data to evaluate and plan programs and compare performance and utilization data.

This exclusive report analyzes the responses of 107 healthcare organizations to HIN’s November 2009 Industry Survey on Reducing Readmissions, presenting the data in more than 20 easy-to-follow graphs and tables.