CPCPracticeSpotlight84

Comprehensive Primary Care is an initiative of the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation

Geriatric Care Coordinator Boosts Patient Confidence, Satisfaction

Family Practice of Middletown; Middletown, N.J.; system-affiliated; 4 full-time physicians, 1 part-time physician; 8,000 patients

Nov. 10, 2016

CPC Change Driver 1: Comprehensive Primary Care Functions

- 1.4: Patient and Caregiver Engagement
- 1.5: Care Coordination across the Medical Neighborhood

For more information about the CPC initiative, visit

http://innovation.cms.gov/initiatives/Comprehensive-Primary-Care-Initiative/

Situation: At **Family Practice of Middletown**, the providers and staff previously felt it was challenging to respond to the frequent calls from and about elderly patients who were homebound or living in a skilled nursing, assisted living or rehabilitation facility. They had to juggle these requests at the same time they were seeing other patients in the office, which sometimes caused interruptions in office visits. In response, the practice developed the Geriatric Care Program. The geriatric care coordinator is **Shirley Bennett**, **LPN**.

How it works: The Geriatric Care Program of Integrated Medicine Alliance (IMA) is staffed this way:

- One full-time physician and one full-time nurse practitioner for patients in skilled nursing, assisted living and rehab facilities. They care for 175 patients.
- One part-time physician and one part-time nurse practitioner who make home visits for 118 homebound patients.
- Four physicians rotating the on-call geriatric schedule.
- All six primary care practices in IMA refer patients to the program. In total, these practices have about 40,000 patients.

***Shirley Bennett, LPN**, is the geriatric care coordinator. Patients rely on her, asking for her by name. "I've had patients call me from their bedside," Bennett said.*

Bennett works with providers, patients, families and the staff of care facilities to coordinate care. Throughout the day, she addresses a variety of issues, including requests for orders on new admissions. She responds to the concerns of patients and their families, and meets with physicians several times a day about different patients.

"There is a lot of trouble-shooting involved, especially with the home care patients," said **Bonnie Thompson**, lead patient care coordinator for Family Practice of Middletown.

Patients and families are pleased with the program, and with Bennett. "It's good for them, they are able to contact me and get their message to me," Bennett said. "There's better coordination with the doctors."

The program was recognized by the **New Jersey Academy of Family Physicians** with its "Patient-Centered Innovation Award."

In their application for the award, the physicians with Family Practice of Middletown wrote, "We hired a nurse dedicated to geriatric care coordination. Dedicated phone and fax lines were installed and all calls regarding these patients were diverted from the front desk to this nurse. She became familiar with the patients, staffs and families and strong working relationships quickly developed."

Patients and providers have benefited in the following ways:

Increased patient confidence: Elderly patients and their caregivers "are more relaxed, they are more confident that someone is taking care" of their concerns, Bonnie Thompson said.

Patient care at home: Dr. Thompson knows the value and effectiveness of home visits, having included them as part of his delivery of care for more than 30 years. As the practice expanded and patients aged, more people needed home visits, another reason for the founding of the Geriatric Care Program. Elderly patients who cannot drive especially appreciate the home visits.

Better communication: Having a Geriatric Care Coordinator benefits patients, their families, physicians and the staff at skilled nursing facilities. Shirley ensures that providers and family members understand the plan of care, which has reduced duplication of services and has increased shared knowledge about the patient's condition.

Dedication draws additional patients: In their application to NJAFP, the providers stated, "We have increased our nursing home census by 20 percent and our home care census by 75 percent. We feel these increases are due to our improved dedication to this population, as evidenced and experienced by the facilities, patients and their families."