REDUCING INPATIENT BED TURNAROUND TIME
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL SAN ANTONIO

Publication Year: 2005

Summary:
The hospital’s average bed turnaround time was almost three hours. By collecting staff suggestions and input, the hospital created a visual system for tracking dirty and clean beds, implemented an electronic bed tracking system, and updated housekeeping policy.

Hospital: University Hospital San Antonio
Location: 4502 Medical Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78229

Category:
- B: Bed Placement
- E: Exit from the ED

Key Words:
- Communication
- Rapid Intake
- Wait Times

Hospital Metrics:
(Taken from FY2005 AHA Annual Survey)
- Annual ED Volume: 70,409
- Hospital Beds: 604
- Ownership: Public
- Trauma Level: 1
- Teaching Status: Yes

Tools Provided:
- None

Clinical Areas Affected:
- Emergency Department
- Inpatient Units

Staff Involved:
- Charge Nurse
- Housekeeping
- Nurses
Innovation
When a University Hospital San Antonio (USHA) ED patient needed to be admitted, one of the typical delays was the time it took for a clean in-patient bed to become available. The hospital’s average bed turnaround time was almost three hours. By collecting staff suggestions and input, the hospital discovered that a simple solution worked best for USHA.

The hospital combined several strategies for reducing inpatient bed turnaround time. These strategies include using a visual system for tracking dirty and clean beds, implementing an electronic bed tracking system, and updating housekeeping policy.

Results
By engaging staff from the inpatient side of the hospital in the problem-solving process, USHA successfully reduced inpatient bed turnaround time from more than 2 hours, 40 minutes to 23 minutes.

Innovation Implementation
The hospital’s housekeeping staff came up with the low-cost, low-tech strategy that made a substantial difference in Reducing Inpatient Bed Turnaround Time. Two jars were placed at the nurses’ station – one to represent clean beds and one to represent dirty beds. Once a patient checked out, the nurse put a bright red slip of paper with the patient’s room number into one of the jars. When housekeeping staff finished cleaning and preparing the room for an incoming patient, they removed the red slip from the first jar and put a green slip with the same room number on it in the second jar. The green slip in the jar served as a highly visible reminder to the unit clerk that an open bed was available and ready to be filled.

Additional changes ultimately reduced the bed turnaround time to 23 minutes by June 2004. These changes included an electronic bed tracking system that provides a valuable electronic notification tool. Another change involved revising and rethinking an existing policy. Previously, housekeeping staff were prohibited from removing sheets from certain beds due to an outdated policy created to prevent staff from being accidentally jabbed by stray needles in the bedding. In recent years, the hospital had moved to a needle-less system, rendering the policy obsolete – yet it had never been eliminated. By updating the policy, the hospital removed an unnecessary barrier and helped the housekeeping staff turnover beds with greater efficiency.

Advice and Lessons Learned
The implementation of these changes has had a positive impact on staff. These simple solutions cut down on bed turnaround time more significantly than any other strategy implemented by the hospital staff. In addition, the staff learned that revisiting hospital policies that are no longer effective for current day processes can change performance.