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Citation
Rodriguez, Christina; Sharkey, Meghan; Joseph, Nerlande; Garcia, Kristine; Del Sol, Carol; and Gonzalez, Jennifer, "Improving Patient throughput: Nurse Leader Advocacy for Discharge Lounge" (2022). All Publications. 4567.  
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Improving Patient Throughput: Nurse Leader Advocacy for Discharge Lounge

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Background

- Delays in discharge process affect throughput.
- At start of project, discharges were being completed with a median time of approximately three hours after a discharge order was placed.
- Longer lag times for discharges resulted in increased length of stay (LOS) which negatively impacted hospital throughput and patient experience.
- Overall purpose of the project was to evaluate the impact on patient outcomes by decreasing the time from discharge order entry to the time of patient departure.

Methods of Implementation

- Lean Six Sigma methodology used to discover delays in discharge process.
- One Director of Nursing Services led a successful implementation of a Discharge Hospitality Lounge (DHL) staffed with a dedicated discharge nurse to expedite discharge process in a safe environment for patients meeting criteria.
- Once discharge order was received, unit clinical nurse notified DHL nurse for eligible patient to be taken to DHL for discharge to be completed.

Outcomes

- Baseline data showed time from discharge order entry to patient departure averaged 173.3 minutes.
- Post intervention time averaged 153.5 minutes.
- This represents an 11.4% decrease.

Discussion

- Nurse leader’s advocacy for implementation of a DHL improved throughput times by providing a mechanism for physical removal of eligible discharged patients from clinical unit.
- This allowed for admitted patients in emergency department to be placed in a bed.

Implications for Practice

- Utilizing Lean Six Sigma systematic approach to problem solving, a Director of Nursing Services was able to lead a team to successfully implement a Discharge Hospitality Lounge to help decompress inpatient beds allowing for better throughput of patients.

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