Does having a nurse navigator vs. not having a nurse navigator decrease the cost of healthcare in patients with a sepsis diagnosis?

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Background

Since the inception of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, there have been changes in the payment and readmission penalty of sepsis patients. The nurse navigator’s role has the potential to decrease Medicare and hospital costs while improving quality of care for the patient.

Purpose

The nurse navigator facilitates the care of a patient with the diagnosis of sepsis across the healthcare continuum. This includes:

- Promoting optimal outcomes
- Preventing readmissions
- Patient education
- Decreasing length of stay in skilled nursing facilities

The coordination of transition of care starts from the time of admission through the 90 day post acute period.

Methods

- Follow patients from the index admission into Jefferson Northeast through the 90 day post acute period.
- Meet the patient in the hospital and participate in the coordination of transition of care.
- Communicate with patients and/or care providers on a weekly basis to discuss goals of care.
- Partner with post-acute providers to obtain clinical information and assessments.
- Assist patients in making appointments and act as a clinical resource for questions that may arise about their disease.
- Coach patients and their families on zone management tool and how to manage their disease from a symptomatic prospective.
- Use the “teach back method” with patients and their caregivers to ensure they have gained knowledge and understanding about their disease.
- Establish rapport with patients by utilizing good communication skills to elicit information.
- Medication reconciliation is performed for all patients within 24-72 hours of the patient discharging from the hospital.

Nursing and Healthcare Implications

- The role of the nurse navigator allows focus to be shifted on a single health condition with the goal of improving the delivery of specific health services for an individual patient.
- The nurse navigator has the potential to eliminate barriers to care by coordinating care with the healthcare team, facilitating care transitions, and educating patients about treatment options.
- Nurse navigators can be strategically placed in the patient’s healthcare journey to help improve patient satisfaction scores that impact reimbursement and deliver quality, cost-effective care.
- Nurse navigators possess necessary clinical experience to recognize potential setbacks or issues that could prevent emergency department visits or an inpatient hospital stay.
- Implementation of a nurse navigator program can be financially beneficial by reducing hospital readmissions and SNF placements and length of stay.

Evaluation

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<th>% of Sepsis Episode Cost over Target</th>
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Variance to target of Sepsis Episode Cost = $1,016,414

Data Source: CMS

Conclusion

Nurse navigators provide education, facilitate the care of the patient, and monitor the patient closely during the index admission and 90 days post hospital stay. They also provide coaching to patients and their families regarding how to manage their disease and use a valuable teach back method to ensure patients’ understanding. These supportive measures resulted in a decreased overall cost of care for sepsis patients.

References


