



2 0 0 1 MISSOURI TEAM QUALITY AWARD RECIPIENT

ASTHMA DISEASE MANAGEMENT PROJECT TEAM at Cox Health Systems in Springfield

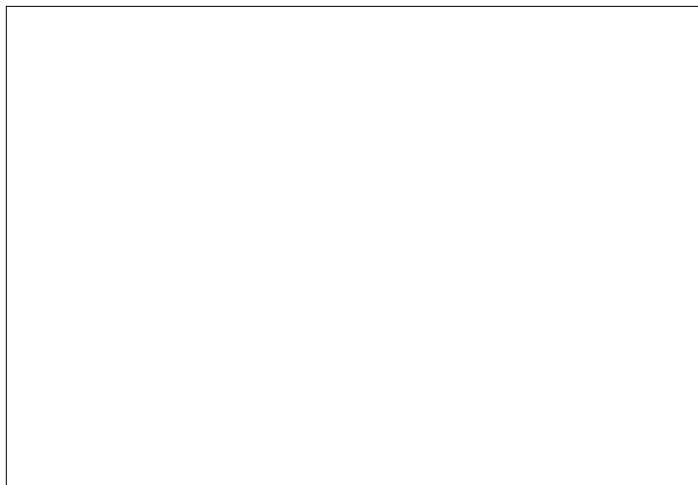
PROFILE

Cox Health System is an integrated health care system in Springfield, Missouri that provides medical services to more than 750,000 people in an 18-county primary service area in southwest Missouri and northern Arkansas. The health system includes three main campuses, more than 50 physician clinics, home health and behavioral health services. The mission of Cox Health System is to improve the health of the communities they serve through quality health care, education and research.

OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

Breathe in, breathe out. Simple isn't it, or is it? Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease of the airway, and its cause is unknown. The prevalence of asthma has been increasing since the early 1980s for all age, sex and racial groups. Due to the increase in the prevalence and severity of this disease, determined by the number of inpatient admissions and Emergency Department visits and their related average costs, the Asthma Disease Management Task Force Team was formed.

The goals of this improvement team were to promote an active partnership with the patient to improve asthma management, and thus improve the quality of life for the patient and



family, and reduce the frequency of potentially life-threatening episodes requiring emergency or acute care.

TEAM ACTIONS

The team gathered and analyzed stakeholder input from patients, physicians and professional staff throughout the initiative. Flowcharts and fish bone diagrams were developed to outline the current process to identify opportunities for intensive analysis and improvement. Service utilization data provided an additional means to understand the situation.

As a result of the analysis efforts, the Asthma Team developed a four-phase plan to implement the goals across the continuum of care. The project included the development of (1) education classes for patients and their families to increase self-management and education for staff development; (2) a simplified treatment guideline for primary care practice; (3) Emergency Room treatment algorithm; and (4) Emergency Department and Inpatient home care instruction packets for managing self-care.

RESULTS

Effectiveness of the project was monitored through the utilization of medical services and the patient's perception of quality of life and functional status as measured by a standardized assessment tool, the SF-36. The team's success has been demonstrated by a decrease in emergency room visits for acute asthma care. Patients completing the asthma education classes have shown a decrease in health care claims and improvement in the quality of life and functional status. Furthermore, the system gained experience in the development of disease management programs.

FUTURE PLANS

The committee will continue to meet to monitor progress, and will travel to other human services agencies to teach the quality improvement model. The CQI Committee meets regularly to analyze program data and evaluate outcomes.

After completing training of the remaining units, the PI team will branch out into other areas that have opportunities for improvement.

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