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Quality Highlights

THIRD QUARTER 2011

Clinicians Make More Informed Care Decisions Using Data Management System

Golden Living has rolled out an important new tool that is helping to enhance patients' outcomes and their quality of life. The tool is the Microsoft® Amalga™ Unified Intelligence System, a data management system that is used in some of the nation's most advanced hospitals. Golden Living is the first post-acute care organization to adopt the tool.

Specifically, clinicians at Golden LivingCenters are using Amalga during daily Clinical Start-Up meetings, Golden Living's comprehensive interdisciplinary daily process with oversight of all admissions, readmissions, and patient changes of condition. Amalga helps to organize large amounts of patient information, enabling clinicians to make more data-driven decisions about patient care and reducing staff time spent on administrative tasks and data collection. Among its benefits, Amalga for Clinical Start-Up alerts staff to changes in patients' conditions that may need follow-up, prompting earlier interventions that help improve patient outcomes.

Clinicians at LivingCenters that participated in the development of this tool have reported having more time to spend with patients, improved patient care, reduced rates of transfers to hospitals, and an increased ease of documenting the patient experience.

Golden Living constantly works to enhance the tools that clinical teams use to provide excellent care. The company's investment in Amalga is the single-largest technology investment that Golden Living has made, and Amalga is expected to provide further benefits for patient care in the future.



Seating and Positioning Program Maximizes Independence and Quality of Life

Golden Living is committed to helping our patients maintain their independence and a good quality of life. To this end, a collaborative effort between Aegis Therapies and Golden LivingCenters is under way this year to assess the best seating and positioning for our patients and residents.

As part of the program, clinicians at each LivingCenter are evaluating patients — particularly those with limited mobility — to determine if they are using wheelchairs



appropriate for their height, weight, physical needs, and medical conditions. Therapists and nurses also are assessing if patients are positioned optimally in bed, for example, to help prevent pressure ulcers and limitations in joint range of motion. Where necessary, patients are being transitioned to different chairs and equipment, which may include custom devices. Clinicians also are educating patients, their families, and physicians about the adjustments.

In pilot programs at Golden LivingCenters in Mississippi, Alabama, North and South Carolina, and Virginia across the past two years, many patients experienced significant functional gains from seating and positioning adjustments, such as the use of different wheelchairs and cushions. For example, the seating and positioning changes helped improve patients' mobility, alertness, muscle tone, respiratory function, and ability to self-feed and perform activities of daily living. For many patients, the adjustments also have increased social contact and opportunity for activities, while reducing the risk of falls, contractures, and pressure ulcers.

AseraCare Hospice Volunteers Bring the Joy of Music to Patients

A group of volunteers at AseraCare Hospice of Bloomington, in the Minneapolis area, is bringing live musical performances to patients' bedsides.

The unique group of volunteers — 12 to 14 in total — is an a cappella choir called "Grace Notes." Officially formed in January 2011, Grace Notes is led by a volunteer who is a local musician. The choir is funded in part by the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

At AseraCare Hospice of Bloomington and all AseraCare agencies, volunteers make a significant time commitment, including at least eight hours of training to prepare them for sharing time with patients and their families. In addition to their biweekly evening performances, members of Grace Notes rehearse for two hours every other week.

The singing volunteers so far have performed in Golden

LivingCenters in the Minneapolis region,

both privately to patients in their rooms and to larger groups in gathering spaces.

According to AseraCare Hospice of Bloomington Volunteer Coordinator Ruth Goettig, patients, family members, and staff look forward to the choir's performances, and some even sing or hum along to familiar and comforting melodies.



Pilot Program Speeds Dispensing of Prescription Medications

A pilot program at several Golden LivingCenters in Maryland and Indiana is enabling patients to receive prescription medications more quickly than they might with traditional pharmacy services. The program involves the use of pre-stocked automated dispensing machines that can dispense medications 24 hours a day, upon approval of an order by an off-site pharmacist.

Remote dispensing has been used by large hospitals with different wings or in satellite facilities to ensure that certain medications can be dispensed quickly. While the use of remote dispensing is not common in skilled nursing facilities, it is proving a success in Golden LivingCenters, said Robert Warnock, DPh, Senior Vice President of Pharmacy Services for Golden Living.

In LivingCenters testing the technology, 80 to 85 percent of oral solid medications typically given to patients can be dispensed using the remote-dispensing unit. Other medications, including patches, ointments, and eye drops, for example, must still be ordered through traditional pharmacy services.

“We have seen phenomenal results. The improved access to medications has improved patient, nurse, and physician satisfaction,” said Warnock. Nurses can process orders much more quickly, which is helpful as LivingCenters care for more acutely ill patients and patients who may be admitted in the evenings or on weekends. Additionally, LivingCenters can work with patients’ physicians at each facility to stock preferred medications.

Golden Living plans to expand this service to more LivingCenters in the near future.



Quality Improvement Efforts Modeled After Baldrige Program

When it comes to the quality of our care, Golden Living is never satisfied with the status quo. Our caregivers take great pride in providing the highest level of care possible for our patients, and we are always looking for ways to improve patient safety and outcomes. To this end, the company has streamlined our Quality Assessment and Assurance process to align with the core values of the Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence Program for the healthcare sector.

A National Institute of Standards and Technology program, the Baldrige Program’s mission is to improve the competitiveness and performance of U.S. organizations. At the corporate level and in our Golden LivingCenters, Golden Living staff is focusing on improving processes by addressing Baldrige Program criteria and core values such as customer-driven excellence, organizational and personal learning, visionary leadership, and valuing workforce members, among others. The result is continuous quality improvement in clinical outcomes and customer service.

The American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) base their annual quality awards on the core values and criteria of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, which is given annually by the President of the United States to U.S. organizations — including those in the healthcare sector — for their achievements in quality and performance.

More than 70 percent of Golden Living’s current LivingCenters have earned an AHCA/NCAL quality award, which is a testament to our company’s commitment to quality care.



AseraCare Home Health Receives CHAP Accreditation

AseraCare Home Health has been accredited as a whole by the Community Health Accreditation Program (CHAP), the nation's oldest community-based accrediting body. AseraCare Home Health is now working to achieve "deemed status" for all individual agency locations.

CHAP is an independent and not-for-profit accrediting body created in 1965 to improve the quality of community-based healthcare services. CHAP accreditation assures patients, families, physicians, insurers, and healthcare professionals that programs have gone beyond minimum quality levels and have met the industry's highest nationally recognized standards of excellence.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services recognizes CHAP as a certifying agent. CHAP-accredited organizations meet federal standards of quality and performance and are therefore certified to provide care to Medicare patients.

In order to earn deemed status CHAP accreditation for each agency, AseraCare Home Health is completing an intensive process of self-evaluation. CHAP is reviewing AseraCare's policies and procedures, governing body, financials, and business structure, and is interviewing senior management during this process. Beginning in August, CHAP will conduct on-site interviews, review documentation, observe patient care, and interview patients. All aspects of patient care, clinical staff, and management will be evaluated.

CHAP accreditation assures our AseraCare Home Health patients, their families, and their doctors that our staff at each AseraCare agency is working diligently to provide consistent quality care.



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