

Neurology

Describe the Practice:

Large neurosurgery group that is affiliated with a university—part of their neuroscience center.

Current State:

The group has a very conservative approach to surgery (surgery is last resort) but does perform a high volume of lumbar spine surgeries. On average, 8% of the patients undergoing lumbar spine surgery are re-admitted to the hospitals within 30 days of discharge for various reasons. Two of the primary reasons are related pain management and incisions that are not healing. The average LOS is just under 2 days. Currently, a team of one neurosurgeon and a research assistant are gathering more data and meeting to determine what interventions might help in reducing presentations to the emergency department and subsequently, readmissions.

DISCUSSION: You are the Practice Facilitator and talking to Department Chair of Neurosurgery - what else is important to know about the current state of the practice?

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Case Study Continues:

From your conversation, you learn that the physicians are most interested in providing great care for their patients. As a teaching institution, they pride themselves on excellent surgical technique and are struggling as to why they are so much over the benchmark of < 4% for readmissions. He feels that his colleagues will feel the same way and are open to making changes that will help. He has little insight as to what his staff do although they follow written pre- and post-op protocols that have been approved.

Discussion: As the Practice Facilitator, what might be your next steps?

Case study continues:

You work to guide the MA's and nursing staff to look at work flows and responsibilities to prepare patients for surgery and for post-op care as per protocol. You also look at readmission rate by clinician and find that there is no significant variation. One of the nurses is really interested in making improvements and agrees to champion these efforts.

Discussion: What ideas do you have to support the champion to guide change? Consider support for practice culture change, emphasis on professionalism, provider communication skills and patient education needs.

What specific changes should the practice consider testing? What should they measure to monitor progress for each change suggested?