

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Risk Management: Get To The Bottom Of High Rehospitalization Rates

Hint: Sometimes the answer to a problem is 'all of the above.'

A high resident re-hospitalization rate may herald a survey fall, but don't jump to conclusions about its cause if you want to resolve it once and for all.

Case in point: In doing a root-cause analysis of an escalating rate of hospitalizations at one nursing facility, **Laura Ferrara, RN, MSN**, and her quality assurance team found several issues that needed correcting. They then formulated an action plan to prevent unnecessary hospitalizations, which included the following strategies:

- 1. Educate referring hospitals about the facility's subacute care capabilities.** "The hospital emergency department staff didn't know the facility could provide that level of care. So they'd get a patient from the facility who simply needed an IV line restarted - and then admit the person to the hospital," says Ferrara. To resolve that problem, the nursing facility management gave hospitals a heads up about their high-intensity nursing services, including IV therapy.
- 2. Provide continuing education for facility nurses to address problems** leading to hospitalization or emergency room visits. Examples included fine-tuning IV techniques so nurses can restart difficult lines - or handling patients on ventilators who go into respiratory distress, explains Ferrara.
- 3. Focus more on palliative care education and goals** to identify resident/family goals for hospitalization up front. "The staff strive to make sure the residents/families understand whether they want hospitalization under certain circumstances - and the consequences of hospitalizations beforehand," Ferrara reports. The facility is also talking to a group of physicians specializing in palliative care to explore the potential for them to work with residents to do a better job in deciding on advance directives.

Editor's Note: This story is based on information presented by Laura Ferrara, RN, MSN, at the most recent **American Health Care Association** annual conference in Miami, and a follow-up interview with Ferrara.