

T E X ★ S Hospitals

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Best Practices

Productivity Tool Helping Therapy Departments Reduce Costs, Improve Efficiency

A staff member at San Jacinto Methodist Hospital in Baytown calls a new productivity tool recently implemented at the hospital “the greatest thing since sliced bread.” Cardiology technician Sandra Mangum said, “It shows me where the bar is set, what management is expecting of me and if I’m making the grade or not. I think it’s going to make all employees strive to be more productive.”

That is exactly the goal of Therapy Track, a tool that enables all types of therapy departments in hospitals and clinics to reduce costs, increase efficiency and profitability and enhance staff satisfaction while maintaining high quality care. It provides regular, personalized performance feedback directly to caregivers in addition to a daily and monthly reporting device summarizing past performance.

“A productive staff is a happy staff,” said Richard Tinsley, Therapy Track founder and chief executive officer. “Chances are your staff wants to do well. By setting and communicating specific targets and establishing consistent expectations, you encourage consistent performance.” Daily and monthly goals and month-to-date tracking help smooth out the normal ups and downs of a department, and provide staff with a reasonable level of emotional and professional independence.

San Jacinto Methodist Hospital recently implemented the tool in inpatient and outpatient physical, occupational, speech and respiratory therapy departments and audiology and cardiology departments, encompassing 50 staff members. Dan Newman, SJMH’s vice president of ancillary and support services, said that the facility desired a more well-defined mechanism for tracking therapists’ and technicians’ time. “Now we can follow efficiency and productivity down to the individual level,” he said. While ultimately the hospital expects to realize labor and cost savings, the main goal is to enhance patient care by ensuring that therapists and technicians are making the best use of their time.

Some employees were concerned initially about having their time closely monitored, although that sentiment was the exception and not the rule, according to Newman. “Once we reiterated that we have a commitment to our patients, as well as a responsibility to be good stewards of our time and resources, employees became more comfortable with the idea,” he said.

Therapy Track helps identify potential barriers that may prevent a therapist from spending more productive time with patients, such as answering the phone or dealing with issues from former patients. Being able to track direct and indirect time in patient care can help staff be better stewards of their own time and instill a higher level of accountability. “Patients are getting more productive time from the therapist,” Newman said.

One of the reasons the hospital selected Therapy Track was its ability to compare data to other facilities. “It allows us to benchmark against industry norms,” Newman said. “It’s great to trend performance locally and also to have the ability to compare and contrast our performance nationally. It adds another dimension to our goal of excellence in patient care and service.” From a pricing standpoint, the service is very competitive, he said. The program also is user-friendly, allowing for quick implementation time, and data are easily and readily accessible.

“Now that Therapy Track is in place, our therapists and technicians are very attuned to how they are spending their time,” Newman said. “It has raised their awareness of time management. We’ve been very pleased and think this will be a great addition to our productivity and quality of care measures.”

With clear goals, employees understand what is expected of them. “As a result, well-rounded, competent employees feel better about the job and can be more productive team members,” said Tinsley.

Newman added that the company has been wonderful to work with throughout the process. “They were generous with their time in the planning phase and continue to be available through implementation.” ★

Therapy Track is endorsed by the Texas Hospital Association. For more information, visit www.therapytrack.com.

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