

## DIRECTOR OF PATIENT SERVICES REPORT



**September 12, 2023**

**Home Health Compare Star Ratings-** We have received **5 stars for patient satisfaction** as updated (July 2023) on CMS home health compare website.

**Telehealth-** We currently have 40 telehealth remote patient monitoring units. Hospitalization rate continue to remain low for remote patient monitoring users.

**Department of Health Recertification Survey was conducted on April 25, 2023.** One agency deficiency was identified. The deficiency was for PRN medications not listing intervals between doses. For example, if the patient was provided a prescription for a pain medication, as needed, twice a day our order should have indicated that twice a day was at intervals of every 12 hours. Our corrective action plan was accepted by the NY State DOH and all "as needed" medication includes the recommended intervals between PRN doses. We have had improvement for this performance review and currently have 97% clinical compliance.

**Staff Training:** Staff participated in the following trainings: Opioid training, cybersecurity training, monthly staff meetings, and BRIEF training.

**HHA CAHPS:** We migrated over to Press Gainey since January 1, 2022. – This survey continues to report 5 stars in patient satisfaction.

**Cybersecurity** - No issues identified at this time. Staff receive on-going training in cybersecurity. Several staff can access Epic Care Link allowing real time information sharing with UVM, ECH, Porter Hospital and CVPH.

**Rate changes effective September 1, 2023** – The rate changes will reflect the Department of Health Medicaid rates for our agency. We are currently notifying the insurance companies we do business with.

**The agency has openings** - for a Supervising Public Health Nurse, Home Health Aide, an Occupational Therapist and a Registered Nurse. Our physical therapist retired and was replaced by our contract Physical Therapy Assistant who is now an employee. Our occupation therapist requested to go to contract status after returning from maternity leave.

**Electronic Medical Record RFP** – MatrixCare was the best option for the home care agency. Resolutions are in place to present to the board of supervisors to update the CHHA EMR to MatrixCare. This was the only EMR with a focus on homecare. The other RFP's focused on clinic care, outpatient therapy, and behavioral health.

## At Home Adirondack Care

I recently traveled to Newcomb to perform an employee evaluation and home visit with one of our amazing physical therapists. The drive there took about an hour, and we might have arrived sooner if we did not get behind a shiny airstream trailer with out-of-state tags. We drove through “malfunction junction” prior to getting on interstate 87 south to take the North Creek exit. The Blue Ridge road was speckled with the Frontier Town Welcome Center (an essential bathroom stop), a few scattered homes, a buffalo farm, Elk Lake Lodge, multiple hiking trail heads and a nicely kept cemetery. Luckily, the day remained sunny with bright blue summer skies and a few white fluffy clouds. Views of adjacent mountains and tall pines were all around and at one point I was at the elevation of the tree tops. Its beauty was truly breathtaking.

Arriving at our destination and finding a parking spot included care to avoid trapping any of the home occupant’s cars from leaving. With a rap on the door we were greeted by multigenerational family members who welcomed us inside their home. Washing our hands upon arrival is a must. A rule every clinician follows. The smell of breakfast, air freshener and fuel canvassed the surroundings. We met the intended occupant with a smile who cheerfully vocalized their accomplishments from previous visits. “I have been practicing – and I asked my doctor about walking with a cane instead of a walker” the occupant announced.

Therapy began in a usual fashion of intently listening to the speaker, and reviewing any new issues by asking detailed questions. A full assessment followed including testing muscles, strength, balance, and ability to walk to the bathroom, and training on how to get in and out of the bathtub. The therapist adjusted the tub bench so it was the right height and safe for use. A bit of furniture moving was required to ensure safe passage through doors and hallways. Walker and cane adjustments included removing and changing the wheels on the walker to the inside of the frame so it could fit through doors. A tool kit was a must for this visit.

Goals of care were identified by the occupant and new exercises were added by the therapist to a home exercise program. All of this will get the occupant closer to independence. A weight was obtained to identify if the diet was working or if there were needed adjustments. Then the occupant voiced a health concern and recommendations were offered and agreed to. A follow up call to the physician sealed the deal on the recommendations to improve the health concern. A nurse will follow up next to see if the recommendations were effective and to provide teaching reinforcement on the new treatment.

At the end the therapist cleaned the equipment prior to placing it back into the nursing bag, had the patient sign the computer verifying the visit, cleaned the computer and pen, then we washed our hands for 20 seconds, turned off the water using paper towels, and discarded the trash. Documentation of the visit took place in the car prior to taking off for the next home visit adventure. The visits can be miles apart, with or without cell service. Music stations are minimal so Spotify is what I recommend.

My day on the road was brief compared to what our home care clinicians do day in and day out. Traveling from house to house in the summer is really joyful on a beautiful warm August Adirondack day. In the winter it can be really tricky. One time the therapist entered a home in Newcomb with a little dusting of white powdery snow. When the visit was over there was 8” of snow on the ground and the car. A snow broom was required to clean the snow off the car between each visit and of course you would need to follow a plow at 35 miles an hour or less down the winding mountain snow slick roads.

I always enjoy making home visits and watching with amazement our incredibly talented clinicians work their expertise improving patient's health and guiding them to independence. I feel privileged to always learn something new either from the clinician or the patient and their caregiver. We are all truly fortunate to have the dedicated home care staff in Essex County who improve the lives of our citizens and allow them to remain in their homes in the beautiful Adirondacks. This is where people want to be cared for the most – at home!