

How To Reduce Unnecessary Readmissions? Bring Care To Residents

Ebenezer, March 16, 2014

Ebenezer understands that one man's "convenience" is another's "lifesaver."

That's why sites across the system are exploring new ways to bring health care directly to their senior residents, including mobile X-rays and fracture casting, in-house vision and hearing check-ups, online medical record services accessible by residents and their families.

For example, at TowerLight Senior Living in St. Louis Park, residents take advantage of a mobile X-ray service run by Professional Portable X-Ray (PPX).

Anyone needing an X-ray can request a visit, facilitated in about an hour in some cases. Images are taken on site, then sent wirelessly to a radiologist (or to a hospital, if it's determined that a visit is necessary).

PPX visits more than 500 locations in the state, saving many residents a trip to the hospital—a trip that, for some, can be fraught with challenges and hazards.

"People think convenience is an ancillary thing—it's nice if you have it but if you don't, you'll get by, anyway," says Annie Westall, executive director of TowerLight.

"But considering our population— frail seniors— and this harsh winter's bitter cold and ice, preventing unnecessary trips off the property is much more than a convenience. It's a lifestyle enhancement."

Building a bridge to care

The PPX service pairs well with a new Fairview program called Bluestone Vista, which provides on-site preventive care by a group of six Fairview Geriatric Services care providers—i.e. house calls.

"Our team of physicians and nurse practitioners come in on a monthly basis to see residents in their own apartments," says Nancy Anderson, vice president of planning and organizational development for Fairview Senior Services.

"It's a great way to stay on top of that person's health needs, assess any changes that occurred in the past month and, in many ways, prevent potential health problems. The model has been proven to reduce hospitalizations, and family members love it."

Bluestone Vista participants can also access a secure online health care portal called Bluestone Bridge, through which residents can communicate directly with their care team, staff can report any medical concerns they might have about residents and family members can monitor their loved ones' health remotely.

The wave of the future?

The trend toward bringing care to residents, rather than transporting residents to the care, is one that's gained popularity in the past decade and shows no signs of slowing.



Annie Westall, executive director of TowerLight Senior Living, shares a laugh with resident Mavis McMillian. TowerLight residents can get X-rays without ever leaving the senior living facility, among many innovations to bring care to residents.

“I definitely think there is a big shift,” says Gaute Sandberg, executive vice president of PPX.

“With the emergence of Accountable Care Organizations that potentially could be financially penalized if patients are readmitted to the hospital within 30 days of discharge, more groups are providing on-site services like X-rays, pharmacy services, lab services, therapy and on-site doctors’ visits.”

Besides Bluestone Vista and PPX, TowerLight also contracts with a service called On-Site Care, which provides podiatry, vision and hearing care.

On-site massage therapy at many Ebenezer-owned and -managed locations has been a big hit with residents, as has an on-site childcare center, which partners with TowerLight for intergenerational programs.

“For the senior population, making services more convenient is definitely where we’re headed—and I think it’s also going to start happening on other adult populations, as well,” Annie says.

Teams like this across Fairview are working to [reduce unnecessary hospital admissions and readmissions](#), which not only takes a toll on patient outcomes and experience, but also hurts the pocketbooks of patients and families (as well as our bottom line).