

# Partner Spotlight

## 50% Reduction in ED Revisits for Forks Community Hospital

June 4, 2019

### OUTREACH RESULTS IN IMPROVED CARE ON THE WEST END

When someone visits the hospital Emergency Department (ED) doctors often recommend a follow-up appointment with a Primary Care physician. The idea is that patients often require a little extra guidance following an ED visit to ensure progress toward recovery and improved health. When patients don't receive follow-up care they often end up back in the ED, and that's not ideal. Emergency care is expensive and repeated ED use is also not good for patients because it is not designed to replace primary care.

Overuse of emergency care is a challenge for many hospitals, and the staff at Forks Community Hospital (FCH) set out to do something about it. "It was discovered that a lot of patients seen in the ED were asked to follow up, but many either did not have a primary care provider or were not established at a local clinic," recalls the hospital's Case Manager, Kelly Thompson, RN. Once it was discovered why patients were not seeking



*Forks Community Hospital finds success in outreach and education efforts, improving care on the West End.*

follow-up care, the hospital designed a public information campaign to ensure community members knew how access local clinics. The campaign also aimed to educate the public on what types of health conditions require an ED visit and what should be addressed in a visit to a primary care physician. The hospital placed ads in the local newspaper, educated ED staff on how to connect patients with primary care providers, and sent staff to local senior luncheons and other events to talk with community members.

But community education is only part of the equation for FCH. "We started contacting our ED patients. Each morning we run a report on who visited the ED the night before, review each chart, and prioritize each case. Patients requiring

immediate follow-up care are contacted first, and we attempt to reach all patients within seven days of discharge," explained Thompson. Some patients are even able to receive same day follow-up appointments.

FCH's new processes showed positive results almost immediately. "We began this process in August 2018 and saw a decrease in return visits in the first month," said Thompson. Since then FCH "has been able to show a 50% reduction in return visits to the ED within 72 hours." So far FCH's work has targeted Medicaid beneficiaries. They intend to expand to include all patients. The 50% reduction in ED revisits includes all patients, regardless of insurance. Thompson attributes some of FCH's success in improving patient care

to partnership. The hospital's new processes "have helped us get to know and work more collaboratively with our local resources."

Thompson shared that FCH is working to improve care even more. The hospital is "currently tracking return visits, the number of ED visits, and the number of patients receiving follow-up phone calls or primary care provider visits within seven days of ED discharge. It is an ongoing process and we are always looking for ways to improve it!" ♦

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*Our purpose is to facilitate health care delivery transformation and community health improvement across the Olympic region.*

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