

CATS in PRISON

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In 1993 the 73rd Texas Legislature established the Correctional Managed Health Care Committee. The committee was tasked with implementing a health care delivery system for prisons that used a managed care network integrated with the state's public medical schools and affiliated hospitals. In September of 1994, the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) formed a contractual relationship with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to provide managed health care for offenders located in the eastern half of the state. UTMB-CMC provides medical, dental and mental health services to 80% of the states offender population.

UTMB-CMC is able to demonstrate appropriate, comprehensive and ongoing QI activities. The organization is forward thinking in the use of clinical guidelines to evaluate medical practice patterns. Our organization can demonstrate excellence in our advancement of quality initiatives and documented improvements of offender health outcomes. However, Correctional Health Care became the target of criticisms in the media concerning issues related to:

- Potential decline of the quality of health care with the end of federal court monitoring. (June 2001)
- Handling of offender complaints related to health care.
- Internal monitoring of the quality of health care.
- Lack of independent evaluation of the quality health care provided to offenders.
- Administrative oversight of the health care provider.

The University of Texas Medical Branch, Correctional Managed Care contacted the Texas Medical Foundation in 2003 to discuss and design an independent assessment of the quality of health care they provide to the offender population of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. A contract between UTMB-CMC and the Texas Medical Foundation was finalized in June 2004. Evaluation of the quality of correctional health care is a complex process. Standards for assessing care were available from accrediting organizations, but independent review standards were not well established. Methods used to assess the quality of care provided by "free world" HMO's and established correctional health care standards could be adapted and used as tools to evaluate expected performance related to correctional managed care systems.

The Texas Medical Foundation (TMF) audit report submitted January 2005 provided written recommendations for improvement in Operational and Clinical areas. The broad categories evaluated during the audit were:

- Operations
- Complaints
- Quality Improvement
- Utilization Management
- Credentials
- Provider Manual
- Clinical Practice Standards and Guidelines

The report identified areas for improvement through formal recommendation statements and within section discussions. The Correctional Managed Care Quality Improvement/Quality Management (CMC QI/QM) committee reviewed these recommendations and areas of concern and provided a plan for assessing and managing them. The fourteen areas were:

- Operations- an annual overall quality improvement plan should be documented and evaluated with a quality committee.
- Complaints and Grievances- develop a more in-depth tracking of complaints and assign subcategories.
- Identify a quality committee with specific membership and responsibilities within the administrative structure.
- Determine if there are barriers in offender colon cancer screening
- Determine if there are barriers in completing mammograms for breast cancer screening.
- Consider modification of the electronic medical record for infectious disease screening tests
- Provide and document drug abuse counseling
- Provide smoking education and encouragement to remain tobacco free.
- Consideration of more use of combination medications in the treatment of hypertension.
- Improve the ordering of periodic lab studies to identify lipid disorders in non-insulin dependent diabetics.
- Improve cholesterol control
- Continue the evaluation of Coronary Artery Disease.
- Adapt a method to categorize the severity of patients with asthma
- Adapt the International Classification of Epileptic Seizures for our patient population.

The senior executive level reviewed the report and immediately went into action to develop plans to correct the issues that surfaced. A major resource within the TQM plan was to establish a formal department and utilize facility based employees to participate in the process. Through the use of Corrective Action Teams (CATs), UTMB-CMC began to address each of the TMF's areas of concern.

- The CMC Executive Management Team has developed a QI plan including defined quality committee membership and operational structure. This function reports within the quality and Outcomes Department within Total Quality Management (Since changed to Performance Improvement in 2007). The committee receives monthly reports, assesses quality data and make-action recommendations as part of the continuous quality plan.

- A Corrective Action Team (CAT) consisting of the CMC grievance and complaint coordinator and key facility staff has developed and addressed the issues. A new process was developed to categorize grievances.
- The CMC Executive Management Team has developed a QI plan including defined quality committee membership and operational structure. The committee receives monthly reports, assesses quality data and makes action recommendations as part of the continuous quality plan. Total Quality Management and the progress of quality initiatives are reported to the Executive Management Team on a quarterly basis.
- An audit and chart review have been completed and a report forwarded to the Executive Management Team. Patient education developed.
- An audit and chart review have been conducted to identify mammogram screening barriers. A CAT was formed and new process developed on education and compliance for mammograms. Since that initial CAT, the entire area of mammography has been completely redesigned.
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- An EMR matrix group has been identified to address this issue and multiple other EMR documentation modifications. Modifications are ongoing.
- The pharmacy has developed and implemented a patient education information program on substance abuse that is available online through the providers. This is available in both English and Spanish.
- The pharmacy resident training program has completed this project. With the participation of DEPD, a handout on smoking in English and Spanish is now on the CMCWEB for the medical department to provide offenders.
- The Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee has addressed this issue and a response to the Executive Management Team has been completed.
- A CAT team was identified to address the TMF diabetes findings. New case management and guidelines established. An entire patient education program has been developed
- A CAT team was identified to address the TMF cholesterol control findings. New case management and guidelines have been established
- A CAT team was identified to address the TMF CAD findings. New case management and guidelines have been established.
- A CAT team including the Chief Respiratory Therapist and the physician advisor was developed. They forwarded a corrective action plan to the Executive Management Team and it was been approved. The asthma categories are now listed in the EMR. Provider training to use the categories is being developed and will be delivered at the CMC conference. A more comprehensive patient history is now obtained at intake.

- The Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee developed a provider education format. Seizure classifications were established and implemented.

The tremendous support by senior level management to endorse employee involvement in addressing the TMF audit has initiated multiple topics to be addressed through Corrective Action Teams (CAT's). Now within UTMB-CMC's Performance Improvement structure, employees across all disciplines and from multiple locations throughout Texas participate in helping this organization with our mission of: Addressing the health care needs of underserved populations.

This summer the UTMB-CMC leadership made a decision to “kick it up a notch,” and adapt a formal structure for their performance improvement. With the tremendous support of the Quality Texas organization, CMC has become engaged in the Health Care Criteria for Performance Excellence. We realize the journey will be long and not without barriers, but there is strong commitment to embrace this framework to address the ever-changing correctional healthcare environment. We have come a long way since the TMF audit addressing numerous areas of improvement.