Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee, Ill., is a 325-bed facility renowned for its dedication to quality and safety for the patients it draws from a four-county area. In earning the Healthgrades 2014 Patient Safety Excellence Award, Riverside was honored as ranking among the top 10 percent of all hospitals for its excellent performance in safeguarding patients from serious, potentially preventable complications during their hospital stays.

Among Riverside’s top quality and safety priorities is hand hygiene. Director of Quality Mary Schore notes that “hand hygiene is one of the easiest things we can do as hospital staff to prevent the spread of infection.”

As with most hospitals, however, merely communicating the importance of hand hygiene to clinical staff was not sufficient to maintain a consistently high level of compliance at Riverside.

The Challenge: Gathering Accurate Data

Nursing Director Shawnna Cunning recalls, “For a long time we struggled with various methods of trying to analyze whether our staff members were being compliant. Were they cleaning their hands frequently enough? Were our hospital-acquired infection rates low enough?”

Riverside tried direct observation as a technique but quickly ran up against the Hawthorne effect. “People would behave differently when you were observing them,” Cunning says, “and direct observation was very time consuming and tricky.”

Direct observation can only catch a small fraction of the hand hygiene opportunities in a unit, and it’s expensive to implement broadly. Infection Preventionist Martha Bouk discovered that the data they were gathering on hand hygiene was not trusted. Consequently, the quality leadership team felt challenged to find a system that provided data the staff would understand and accept and that also would be safe for patients and caregivers.

The Solution: Implementing the research-based DebMed GMS.

The Results: Nearly doubling hand hygiene compliance.
The Solution: Capturing Every Hand Hygiene Opportunity with DebMed GMS

In seeking a technology that would prove to be both reliable and effective, Vice President of Nursing Michael Mutterer says one requirement stood out: “We didn’t want staff to feel they were being punished, but rather that the system was truly for excellent patient care.”

Additionally, the team wanted to be able to focus on the unit level, providing data that would help each unit improve hand hygiene compliance as a group. Riverside staff found that the DebMed Group Monitoring System (GMS) met all their needs in extraordinary fashion. The DebMed GMS is the only research-based electronic hand hygiene monitoring system that predicts the number of expected hand hygiene opportunities in a unit and compares it to actual performance.

Mutterer observes that because the DebMed GMS monitors hand hygiene compliance based on higher clinical standards such as the WHO and CDC guidelines rather than simply before and after patient care, it raises the bar on improving patient safety and reducing patient infections. “I believe the system really puts us into the next level,” he says, “being able to teach and train our staff to look at opportunities beyond just foaming in and foaming out.”

The Results: Nearly Doubling Hand Hygiene Compliance

The DebMed GMS changed the quality culture among clinical staff at Riverside. “There were always a lot of excuses,” Cunning recalls, “but with DebMed there are no excuses, there is no debating it, there is no disputing it. Either you’re cleaning properly and using the Five Moments for Hand Hygiene or you’re not. So now we have a true method of measuring that and analyzing our own performance.”

By encouraging collaboration and accountability, the DebMed GMS can help improve hand hygiene compliance.

“Prior to using the DebMed hand hygiene system,” Schore says, “our compliance rate was at 32 percent, and since using the DebMed system, our hand hygiene compliance has risen to 62 percent.”

Mutterer says an important contributor to this near doubling in compliance was the medical center’s support of the system at the administrative level. “I believe that by engaging initially with the DebMed GMS and supporting it from the top down,” he states, “we’ve had better buy-in from the bedside nurse.”

He indicates the organization has found three distinct advantages to the DebMed system:

- Patient quality and safety
- Return on investment
- A less intrusive method for the organization to monitor hand hygiene compliance

“Now we have a true method of measuring hand hygiene compliance and analyzing our own performance.”

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