



CREATING A CULTURE OF QUALITY

Outreach and Education Initiatives to Improve Patient Engagement

Northwest Renal Network's Patient Advisory Committee (PAC) recognized the need to engage more patients within the Network region. In an effort to increase the visibility and accessibility of the Network, recommendations were made for new outreach and education initiatives. Analysis of the first eight months after the rollout of these new activities in the fall of 2011 indicate a significant rise in patient contacts with the Network.

Organization Name: Northwest Renal Network (NWRN)

Authors: Lisa Hall, MSSW, LICSW, Patient Services Director; James Buss, MA, CDP, AFP

Project objective, purpose & goals: Analysis of consumer contacts received by the Network, and the impact that new Network outreach / education activities have on increasing contacts.

Setting: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington

Sample/Patients: Mailing of postcards to all incident patients six months after initiation of dialysis. Distribution to all Network facilities a patient bulletin, featuring "topic of the month," for utilization as handouts and/or posters. For all consumer calls to the Network, staff inquires how they heard about the Network, the reason for their call, and whether they had heard of the Network prior to making this contact.

Process studied: Average number of patient calls per month relative to the same period in the prior year, and percentage of callers to the Network that indicate a new outreach / education activity increased their awareness of NWRN services.

Intervention: In addition to existing Network outreach / education activities (Consumer Newsletters, new patient mailings, eBulletins, patient meetings), the Network, with MRB and PAC involvement, rolled out new initiatives: monthly patient bulletins, mailing postcards to all incident patients after six months on dialysis, website redesign, development of a new exhibit display and increasing patient enrollment in NWRN's eBulletins. To increase recognition about the Network, all patient outreach materials were revised or developed to include the phrase "Helping Navigate Kidney Disease" along with a compass pointing to the northwest. Additionally, all NWRN patient materials include the Network's mission, type of assistance available, toll-free number, website, and link to sign up for eBulletins.

Evaluation: The first patient outreach postcards were mailed in November 2011, and in the eight months following (November 2011 – June 2012), the average number of patient calls per month increased by 23% (13.9 to 17.1) relative to the same period in the previous year (2010-2011). The underlying trend was a 1% increase (13.8 in 2009-2010 to 13.9 in 2010-2011). During the same time span, the dialysis population grew by only 5%. Over half, 54%, of the increase in calls was from patients who directly indicated that the postcard prompted their call to the Network. The monthly patient flyers were well received and shared by providers, but had less impact on prompting patient calls to the Network.

Conclusion and Recommendations: NWRN's PAC recognized the need to alter the look and timing of Network outreach materials to patients. Analysis of the first eight months after the rollout of these new activities indicated a significant rise in patient contacts with the Network. Many Network facilities went beyond distributing and posting NWRN's patient materials and included the information in their facility newsletters. The information, though intended for patients, also serves to educate staff on the continued efforts toward patient engagement in their own health care delivery.