
Wenatchee Valley Medical Center's Successful Chronic Disease Care Management Model

Wenatchee Valley Medical Center, Wenatchee, Washington

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Wenatchee Valley Medical Center (WVMC) developed a successful chronic disease care-management model with the Health Buddy® Program through a CMS Demonstration Project. WVMC's strategy for chronic disease management includes care coordination, regular patient interaction with a nurse, health coach, or case manager (rather than only with a physician), and self-management tools for the patients utilizing information technology. Patients in the Health Buddy Program are offered educational courses and in conjunction with the teachings from the Health Buddy device become more knowledgeable about their condition. Patients arrive to appointments much better prepared than previously, having all their lab tests performed in advance and knowing what questions to ask. As a result, the medical appointment is spent addressing results, not gathering symptoms.

Excerpted from:

Intensive Care Management Supported by Technology: An Effective Approach to Managing Complex Chronic Illness, Peter Rutherford, MD. Julie Sanderson-Austin, RN, and Lori Smet, MN, RN, CCM; *Group Practice Journal* - January 2010

In this Demonstration Project, CMS endeavored to test different models of provider-based intensive care management as a means of improving quality and reducing high cost medical care, including ER visits and inpatient hospital stays. CMS identified eligible patients through Medicare claims showing a pattern of high cost utilization, as well as other criteria developed in conjunction with the Demonstration Projects; programs then sought to enroll patients from the eligible population in their geographic areas, as participation in the Demonstrations is voluntary. Eligibility for the Health Buddy Program is based on a previous diagnosis of congestive heart failure (CHF), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or diabetes mellitus....

The care management model is supported by an in-home survey and data collection device (the Health Buddy® appliance) that is easy for patients to use, and an Internet-based application used by care managers (the Desktop) for review of clinical data and decision support, based on physician approved protocols....

The American Medical Group Association (AMGA) is a partner in the Health Buddy Project. Together with WVMC, AMGA believed the Health Buddy Program would demonstrate that multi-specialty medical groups, using a consistent model of care management supplemented by technology, can effectively reduce hospital use and achieve better outcomes at a lower cost. Both AMGA and WVMC observe clinical and financial indicators of this program's success at WVMC and believe it is a replicable model. Regrettably, adoption

of care management has been slow because care management services are not reimbursed in traditional fee-for-service settings.

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