

PinnacleHealth System

Soarian Clinical's Healthcare Process Management helps nurses improve dysphagia screening and reduce rates of aspiration pneumonia.

Soarian® Clinicals and Healthcare Process Management

Challenge

When stroke patients are given oral medications or fed prior to being evaluated by a speech-language pathologist, they are at an increased risk for aspiration. ("Aspiration is an important variable related to increased morbidity, mortality, and cost of care for acute stroke patients." (Leder & Espinosa, 2002, p. 214)

PinnacleHealth System (PHS) collected stroke data using the American Heart/American Stroke Association's "Get with the Guidelines" data collection tool for stroke patients from February 2007 through January 2008. Based on these data, it was determined that performing and documenting dysphagia screens prior to any oral intake was one of PHS's weakest areas.

A dysphagia screen (documented on a paper form) was trialed on three pilot units with little success. Nurses stated the primary reason for non-compliance with the screening requirement was that it was documented on paper. Nurses subsequently requested an electronic solution to help improve documentation compliance.

Solution

A swallowing screen that can be performed by nursing was developed in a collaborative effort between the nursing and speech-language pathology staff.

Using Soarian Clinicals and its Healthcare Process Management capability, PHS designed a dysphagia workflow that begins at admission for all inpatients.

- The workflow helps the clinician evaluate the documented reason for admission (such as stroke/TIA/ICH)
- It also supports nurses in evaluating certain assessment findings documented on a shift, admission, or individual body system assessment (such as difficulty swallowing). This evaluation

helps the organization ensure that the workflow continues to monitor at-risk patients without a clear admission diagnosis of stroke.

- If the workflow flags any of these triggers to the appropriate clinician, it helps to expedite the sending of the clinician's order to complete the dysphagia assessment and a nothing-by-mouth (NPO) diet order to the clinician's worklist.
- When the clinician documents and saves the dysphagia assessment, the workflow provides support for evaluating the responses.
 - If the patient fails the water sips test or any responses are documented as 'no,' the workflow supports the completion of an order for a speech/swallowing evaluation.
 - If the patient passes the water sips test, a notification is sent to the nurse, who enters the original diet order or contacts the physician for the diet order.

Outcomes

- Dysphagia screening compliance increased from 29% in January 2008 to 81% in January 2010
- Aspiration pneumonia rates decreased from 2.7% in January 2008 to 0.0% in January 2010

"The graphs show the remarkable decrease in aspiration pneumonia seen in our acute stroke patients since we have focused on requiring screening for dysphagia (impaired swallowing) before allowing patients to be fed orally. This is a tribute to the hard work of our clinical staff at Pinnacle — clearly a Pinnacle proud moment!"

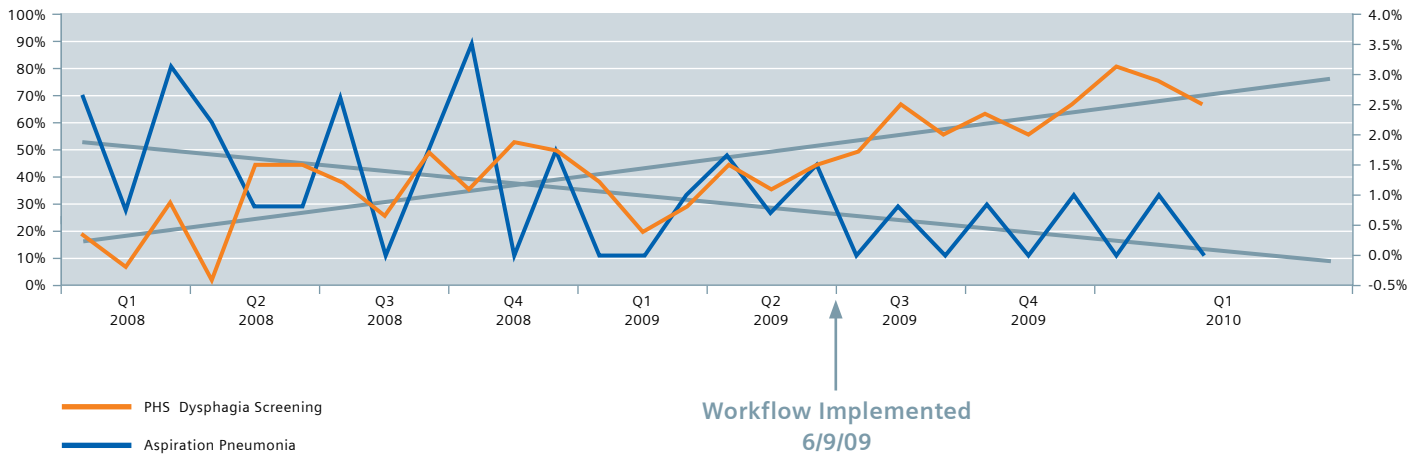
Corey Rigberg, MD
Vice President for Medical Affairs

PinnacleHealth System

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The data below denoted a decrease in aspiration pneumonia due to an increase in dysphagia screening.



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