Case Study

Title: Comprehensive Linen Management Program Reaps Significant Rewards

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AIM

A 700+ bed facility in the Southeast Region was faced with the challenge of reducing their pounds of linen utilized per patient activity. The patient activity and linen poundage data collected indicated the hospital was above the national average for pounds utilized per patient activity, and this key performance indicator was trending upward.

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<tr>
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<th>Fiscal Year 2002</th>
<th>Fiscal Year 2003</th>
<th>National Benchmark</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pounds Per Patient Day</td>
<td>28.16</td>
<td>29.16</td>
<td>25.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pounds Per Adj. Patient Day</td>
<td>16.59</td>
<td>17.66</td>
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Based on the increasing pounds utilized per patient activity, the hospital needed a way to systematically identify the cause of the higher than average pounds per patient activity and develop a plan to correct the issue.

STRATEGY

In an effort to identify and correct the causes of their increasing pounds utilized per patient activity, Standard Textile Company, Inc. was asked to conduct a Total Facility Audit. The Total Facility Audit is a comprehensive analysis utilized to examine all phases of the linen system including procurement, processing, distribution, utilization and soiled retrieval. The goal of the Total Facility Audit was to identify opportunities for potential cost savings within the system and develop recommendations and action plans to realize these potential savings.

A crucial part of the audit process is collecting the data necessary to assess the current health of the linen system. To collect this data, various tools are used to gather and analyze this information.

- ControlTex® Linen Management Software – A linen management application used to track daily linen usage within a facility and generate useful information based on the usage data collected.
- Departmental Surveys – A twenty-question survey completed by linen end users to assess linen utilization habits and any service or product quality issues.
- Clean Linen Discharge Audit – An analysis tool used to quantify the expense associated with bringing excess clean linen into the patient rooms.
- Activity & Expense Statement – A form used to collect relevant patient activity and linen expense information from the facility, which can be used to develop a benchmark analysis. A benchmark analysis compares the key performance indicators for a particular facility against industry benchmarks. Some of the key performance indicators include: pounds per patient day, pounds per adjusted patient day, and linen replacement cost per pound.

Using the various data collection tools listed above in combination with onsite interviews with end users and facility observations, a list of recommendations was developed. The goal of the recommendations was to improve linen utilization habits within the facility and reduce linen related costs.

- Utilize ControlTex Linen Management Software Effectively.
  - Utilizing a linen management system effectively is the key to gaining visibility of linen utilization patterns for each unit and managing the system efficiently.
- Implement an “As Needed” bed changing policy.
  - The current policy of “Every other Day” was not being utilized or enforced.
- Revise the Bed Making Standard with a focus on improving Underpad utilization.
  - Underpads were layered on beds, which significantly increased poundage per patient activity.
- Avoid bringing excess linen into the patient room.
  - On average 6.074 pounds of clean linen was still in the room when the patient was discharged.
- Utilize bath blankets in the ancillary units.
  - Bath blankets weigh less and cost less than thermal blankets.
- Implement a linen discard program.
  - A significant amount of stained/damaged linen was circulating in the system.
- Limit users of hospital-owned scrubs
- Improve linen awareness.
  - The best way to improve linen utilization habits is a comprehensive linen awareness program that continuously educates end-users about linen utilization best practices.
- Charge units for the costs associated with linen usage.
  - This creates accountability with end users and produces the desired result of improved linen utilization practices.

In addition to the recommendations that focused on improving linen utilization, the audit also consisted of several recommendations focused on improving linen loss and the linen distribution system.

RESULTS
The audit report was presented to the administration team at the hospital. They immediately began to implement most of the recommendations outlined in the report. Over the next year the linen management team made several significant accomplishments to improve the overall linen system, which resulted in dramatic savings for the facility. For the purpose of this case study, we will focus on the accomplishments that directly improved the pounds of linen utilized per patient day and adjusted patient day.

- ControlTex Linen Management Software was used effectively.
  - Usage data collection was dramatically improved which resulted in a dramatic improvement in the information generated by the system.
- An “as needed” bed change policy was implemented.
- A Clean Linen Discard Program was implemented.
- A follow-up Clean Linen Discharge audit revealed the average weight of clean linen left in the room per discharge decreased from 6.07 lbs. to 4.7 lbs.
- Bath blankets are now being utilized by all of the ancillary units.
- A home laundering program was implemented for all scrub users with the exception of OR and staff physicians.
- A continuous linen awareness program has been established.
- Based on the usage information collected in ControlTex, nursing units are now charged for the costs associated with linen usage.

The combined effect of the accomplishments that were achieved in the first year resulted in a truly remarkable savings for the facility. In one year, the hospital went from being 15% higher than the benchmark for Pounds Per Patient Day to 11% below the national benchmark for this category resulting in a net reduction of 6.97 Pounds Per Patient Day. The decrease in pounds utilized per patient day resulted in an annual savings of $469,092 in linen processing costs.

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**CONCLUSION**

The systematic approach of establishing a baseline of key performance indicators for a facility, benchmarking against established standards, identifying areas of opportunity, developing a game-plan to improve existing procedures and implementing the plan has produced impressive results.

Moving forward, the hospital plans to work with the existing foundation that has been established and to continuously look for other areas in the system that have potential for improvement.