

A SALUTE TO: NAVAL HEALTH CLINIC CORPUS CHRISTI REFERRAL RECONCILIATION PROCESS

Naval Health Clinic Corpus Christi enhanced its patient care by streamlining the referral reconciliation process with a performance improvement strategy that accelerates capture and posting of legible referral results in patients' electronic medical records.

Clinic primary care managers refer patients to network providers for specialty care, but were limited to paper processing that made tracking and measurable metrics difficult.

Now, Team Corpus Christi performs 100% review, reconciliation or closure of all initial network referrals and provides a disposition for each. The total number of administratively closed referrals is at 98%.

Setting up the process was straightforward. It involved constructing a five-step plan that closes the loop within 10 weeks by submitting the referral; tracking and obtaining 'evaluate only' results within 10 days and 'evaluate and treat' results within 30 days; converting results into a PDF file; posting results in the initial patient encounter; and finally notifying provider for automatic sign-off on the note.

This efficient electronic process improves patient continuity of care because the paperless environment reduces document-filing person-hours, and network health care professionals can provide clear, legible electronic follow-up that facilitates expeditious patients' electronic medical records filing.

The clinic's Medical Management team goes the extra mile by training key personnel in daily clinic operations; networking with other facilities to expand web portal access for fast results; monitoring an alert system, notifying providers of unused referrals 14 days prior to administrative closing date; and tracking daily urgent care and emergent care for clinic nurses to follow-up on patients' medical necessities.

Dedicated to patient and family centered care, Naval Health Clinic Corpus Christi's referral resulting initiatives improve continuity of care and conserve valuable resources. They are sustainable in healthcare settings and they ensure providers have the necessary clinical information without having to request on the spot results.



Lt. Lonetta Canales, medical management department head, and Patricia A. Prewit (right), referral reconciliation specialist, discuss the referral reconciliation process that has significantly improved patient continuity of care at Naval Health Clinic Corpus Christi. The poster, 'Closing the Loop' that Prewit is pointing at was shown at the Health Innovations Program 2010 Military Health Systems Conference recently and has been selected to be presented at the American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN) conference in May. (U. S. Navy photo by Bill W. Love/Released)