



Releasing Time To Care™ in Saskatchewan

In September 2008, the Health Quality Council (HQC) led a delegation of 19 health system leaders to England to learn more about a relatively new and promising initiative called **Releasing Time to Care: The Productive Ward™ (RTC)**. The delegation included members of the Ministry of Health, Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses, Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, Five Hills Health Region, Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, and Saskatoon Health Region.

Seven individuals received training from and were certified as Master Trainers by the National Health Service (NHS) Institute for Innovation and Improvement. The remaining delegates met with their executive-level counterparts to learn more about the successes and challenges of implementing RTC in the UK. Both groups toured various hospitals to see first-hand and hear about the impact of RTC on acute care wards.

Since returning from England, HQC has been pleased to see a high level of excitement and interest about RTC within the health care community. Here is a summary of what we learned and next steps for rolling out RTC in Saskatchewan.

What is Releasing Time to Care: The Productive Ward™?

RTC is a patient-centred approach to improving the quality of care on acute care nursing units. The initiative – which focuses on freeing up caregivers' time for more direct patient care – is designed and packaged as a box set of 15 modules. Each module provides a step-by-step guide to improving processes of care using a variety of straightforward tools and techniques - some of which have been adapted from Lean methodologies. Although RTC is designed around nursing processes, everyone involved in providing care or services at the unit level – care assistants, pharmacists, therapists, physicians, housekeeping staff, maintenance workers, and dietary staff – has an important role to play in implementing RTC. (For more detailed information about the modules, go to www.institute.nhs.uk).

Engaging clinicians in quality improvement – through initiatives such as Releasing Time to Care – is a key element of our new Accelerating Excellence strategy. By making available opportunities such as RTC, the Quality as a Business Strategy learning collaborative, and the new Quality Insight measurement and reporting program, HQC continues to help lay the foundation for transformational change in Saskatchewan's health care system.

The Purpose

The overall aim of RTC is to increase the time health care providers spend on direct patient care. Nurses and other care providers often spend valuable time away from the patient looking for items, searching for information about patients and their plan of care, duplicating charting, and dealing with numerous interruptions. RTC helps care teams identify where they are spending time on activities that do not add value for patients and provides guidance on how to test and implement changes to improve effectiveness and efficiency of care.



The Potential

In England, direct care time increased by up to 60% on one unit following implementation of RTC, allowing time to be reinvested into safer and better care for patients. A number of units that have implemented RTC have also seen a reduction in falls, pressure sores, and infections such as C.difficile and MRSA. Staff have also observed an increased level of patient satisfaction with the quality of care received on the unit.

Many of the care teams that have implemented RTC are more engaged and empowered by the changes they have implemented on their units. These changes have led to higher staff satisfaction and a positive shift in the culture within these units and more broadly across the organization.

The modules are simple to use but the work involved is not easy! RTC requires a commitment from all levels of an organization to truly focus on the patient. This requires a significant amount of time and challenges everyone within the organization to think differently. The good news is that once time starts to be released, more time can be invested into patient-centred improvement initiatives and soon it becomes a routine part of daily practice for everyone. Experience in England has demonstrated that when care providers are involved in redesigning processes of care, tremendous gains in patient care outcomes are possible.

Testing RTC in Saskatchewan

Since the fall of 2008, two units have been involved in testing the applicability of RTC in the Saskatchewan context - 3B Oncology at the Pasqua Hospital in Regina and the Medicine Unit at Moose Jaw General Hospital. The pilot teams have seen a number improvements on their ward and they report that staff are becoming more engaged as they move through each of the modules. Concept testing is now completed and a report, *Releasing Time to Care™ in Saskatchewan: Promising Signs that Program Engages Clinicians*, (available on the Health Quality Council web site) describes their experiences and insights on how to improve the program. In particular, we have learned that the active support of senior leaders and effective communication at all levels are two essential ingredients for the success of RTC in Saskatchewan.

Context Testing

Context testing involved 12 new sites in ten facilities in six health regions across the province. These facilities established additional RTC “showcase” units and provided valuable learning opportunities to inform the provincial rollout strategy.

Expansion of Releasing Time to Care™ program in Saskatchewan

Beginning March 31, 2010 there will be five cycles of training offered by the Health Quality Council with approximately 15 units per cycle, until March 2013. There are 18 wards/facilities signed up for the first cycle of training which began in April, 2010.

Releasing Time to Care™ will be adopted by a variety of wards - including mental health and oncology - and in community hospitals and long-term care facilities. Health regions have been asked to implement Releasing Time to Care™ in all medical and surgical wards in the province by 2012.

For more information about Releasing Time to Care™, visit our web site at www.hqc.sk.ca or contact:

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Releasing Time to Care™ in Saskatchewan is on YouTube! Take a look:
www.youtube.com/saskhqc

