Geisinger Health System

Uses IVR to Reduce Readmissions by 44%

Geisinger Health System had developed a manual system for post-discharge follow up calls to reduce readmissions but found that the process required so much provider time that the approach could not be scaled to cover all patients who could benefit. Therefore, they adopted an interactive voice response (IVR) system to follow up with patients after they were discharged from the hospital. The IVR was added to a comprehensive system of case management that is used by Geisinger for all Medicare Advantage patients and that had previously been shown to reduce readmission rates in this population. A case manager selected patients who were at high risk and able to make phone contact and made initial calls to patients 24 to 48 hours after discharge. Based on the initial call, patients were enrolled in the IVR program; this call was followed by weekly IVR calls for 30 days post discharge. The IVR calls consisted of a structured survey using branching logic that asked about medication adherence, symptoms and complications. Items requiring follow up were sent to the case manager via the EHR. The IVR encounters were documented in the Epic EHR that is shared by all inpatient and outpatient providers.

The researchers compared the readmission rates of patients before and after the intervention with a control group that was not enrolled. Patients in the program were 44% less likely to be readmitted within 30 days.

The complete study is available on the Geisinger web site at