

Expansion of Outpatient Nutrition Services

The Problem

Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) provided by Registered Dietitians (RDs) has been demonstrated to result in improved health outcomes for patients with a variety of medical conditions (including diabetes, pregnancy, CKD, obesity, and more). MNT also reduces overall healthcare costs- current research shows that for every \$1 invested in lifestyle-based MNT provided by an RD, a return of \$14.58 was shown.

The BIDN Outpatient Nutrition Clinic had 12 RD hours per week in the beginning of 2013, with an appointment wait time of several weeks and sometimes months. BIDN and the Food and Nutrition department identified an opportunity to expand the OP Clinic hours to better meet patient needs, reduce overall healthcare costs, and increase revenue for the outpatient department as well as spend more time marketing and in the community.

Aim/Goal

Two central goals existed for the expansion of the OP Nutrition Clinic. One was to increase the availability of outpatient nutrition appointments to 40 hours/week with clinic hours flexible and based on patient request. The second was to observe an increase in number of patients seen and total revenue, measured on a monthly basis.

The Team

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Food Service

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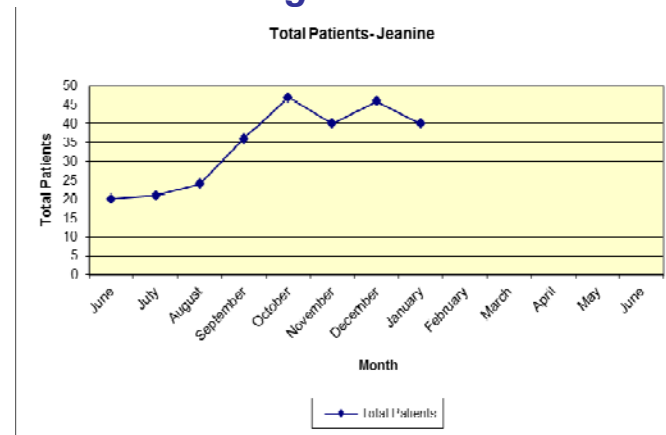
Helen Chan – Finance, BIDN

Chip McIntosh – Support Services
CQPA Director

The Interventions

- In June 2013, hired .8FTE RD to staff the OP Nutrition Clinic, as well as support inpatient nutrition, community outreach, and marketing efforts
- Gradually expanded OP Nutrition Clinic to be open 40 hours/week by November 2013, as office space became available within the hospital
- Tracked RD productivity, number of patients seen, and estimated revenue from the OP Nutrition Clinic
- Tracked RD productivity in non-revenue generating tasks, such as administrative work and scheduling, staff training, marketing, community outreach, inpatient coverage, and employee wellness programs
- Tracked patient satisfaction with OP Nutrition appointment using anonymous surveys

The Results/Progress to Date



BIDN OP Nutrition Clinic Estimated Monthly Revenues, based on weekly Clinic hours. Note the continued increase in revenue as OP Clinic hours were increased, with a small dip when the Clinic fax number was changed in November. Communication by fax provides a large percentage of patient referrals from BI-affiliated physicians.

Lessons Learned

As we expanded the hours of the OP Nutrition Clinic, we found a % increase in estimated revenue and a % increase in number of patients seen per month. After 7 months, we have increased OP Nutrition Clinic revenue by ... %. The wait time for appointments was reduced from 6-8 weeks to 1-2 weeks. Patient surveys indicated that patients were very satisfied with OP Nutrition services intended to follow up with the OP RD with regular appointments.

While it took several months to expand the Nutrition Clinic, due to physical space and time constraints, we were able to achieve 40 hrs/week availability for patients. After the first 2 slow months of revenue increase, we discovered the importance of providing advanced notice of changes and availability to patients, OP Clinic staff, and referring physicians. We utilized the extra time by involving the OP RD in several projects, including leading customer service training for Food and Nutrition staff, developing employee wellness programs for BIDN staff, being involved with community outreach events, and providing inpatient coverage as needed.

Next Steps

- Increase marketing and community efforts in order to increase maximize revenue and productivity at 40 hours /week
- Continue to track revenue- and non-revenue generating productivity
- Better understand reimbursement rates and track inefficiencies in reporting.

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