

Acuity-Link: Improving Inefficiencies in Patient Transports

By: April Palmquist CMRP, RLLD

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Introduction/Problem

Patient transportation to and from the Medical Center is a manual and unpredictable process. Ambulance transports cause bottlenecks in the discharge process impacting patient throughput and the patient experience. Likewise, ambulatory patient transports traditionally use taxi vouchers to transport patients home. The voucher system is antiquated, costly, and easily abused.

Our current transportation model is inefficient which causes dissatisfaction for both patients and staff. Supply Chain and members of the Emergency Department, Ambulatory, and Social Work were determined to find a better, more reliable way to safely transport our patients to their next destination.

Similarly, Acuity-Link understood the same problem and created a centralized transportation dashboard to connect hospitals directly with transportation companies to ensure efficient transportation for patients.

Through our partnership with Acuity-Link, BIDMC has seen improvements in safety, satisfaction, and reliability of patient transportation with the implementation of Acuity-Link's centralized transportation dashboard.

Aim/Goal

To provide safe and reliable travel for patients to and from the Medical Center at the most affordable rate while increasing transparency to the current system for all involved—patients, staff, and ambulance providers

The Team

- Chip McIntosh, Senior Director Supply Chain
- Steve List, Contract Manager
- April Palmquist, Contract Specialist
- Lisa Yanovich, Administrative Director, Emergency Room
- Kelina Orlando, MBA, Executive Director of Ambulatory Operations
- Christine Lyons, Administrative Manager-Operations, Social Work Department
- Nicholas Kriketos, Manager, Service Ambassador Program

The Interventions

- The Emergency Department was first to pilot the ambulance and ambulatory patient transport dashboard in April, 2018. The ED provided important feedback throughout the pilot to enhance the user experience and make scheduling patient transports effortless for the end user.
- BIDHC Chelsea, Social Work, and the Service Ambassadors were heavily involved in the ambulatory patient transport pilot. Departments scheduled rides for patients through Acuity-Link's partnership with Lyft.
- Data was gathered on the number of departments and their spend associated with transporting patients using the existing taxi voucher system. We used this data to pinpoint areas for the next phase of Acuity-Link's implementation.

Results/Progress to Date

The Emergency Department, Social Work, and BIDHC Chelsea found the ambulatory patient transport dashboard easy-to-use and reliable for ambulatory patient transports. Lyft provides excellent curb-to-curb service, is always on time, and maintains an affordable rate as compared to the taxi voucher system.

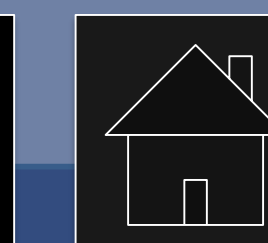
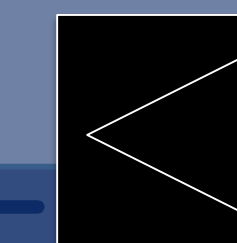
Acuity-Link and the ED worked closely with our contracted ambulance service provider, Cataldo Ambulance Service, to further implement and enhance the ambulance transportation platform in Acuity-Link. Tablets were installed in most ambulances contracted to work at BIDMC as a way to enhance visibility and provide real-time estimated times of arrival and GPS tracking of ambulances.

With the success of the platform in piloting departments, the team decided in February, 2019 to fully implement Acuity-Link for the remaining in-patient units. Information Systems worked with Acuity-Link to implement single sign-on making it seamless for end users to log in and request transportation.

We relied heavily on Social Work to update and communicate the Medical Center's transportation decision trees to include Acuity-Link as an option for safe and reliable patient transportation. BIDHC Chelsea has seen improvements in accountability, protection of patient information, and improved patient experiences with the successful implementation of the new platform.

For more information, contact:

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More Results/Progress to Date

Requesting rides for patients has never been so easy and transparent. Acuity-Link takes the place of the often time-consuming telephone conversations to Cataldo and streamlines patient information into one safe location.

Acuity-Link has shown to reduce the request time by up to 75%.

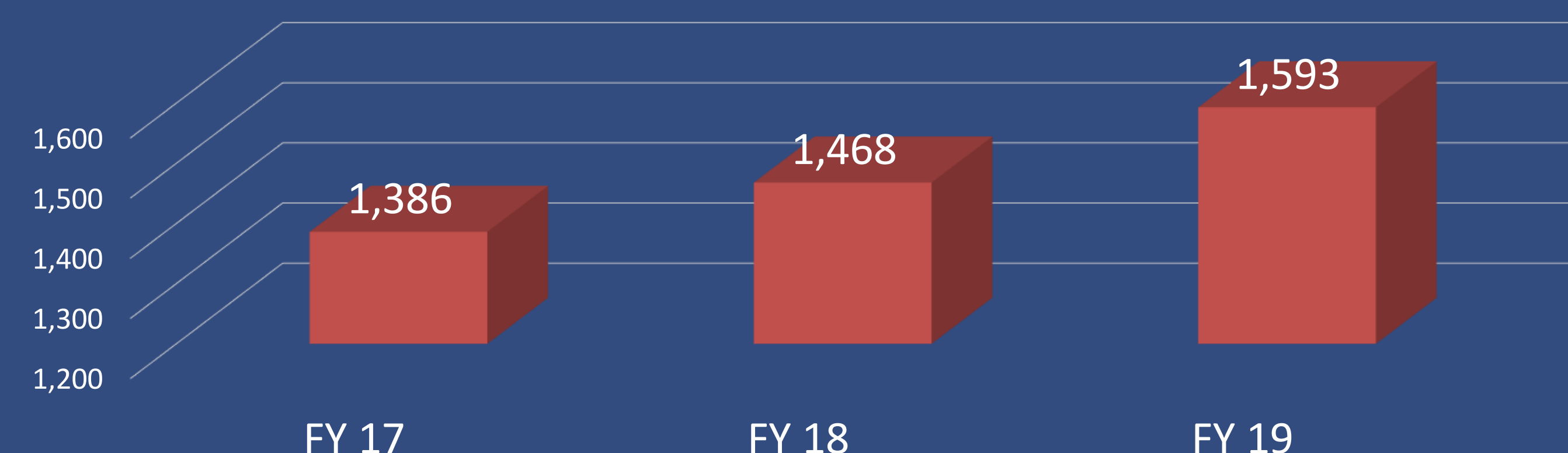
Operational Improvements:

- Reduced delays and minimized bottlenecks
- Improved patient throughput
- Enhanced patient care and experience
- Alignment of discharge time with arrival of the medical transportation
- Ability to pre-plan discharges and transfers hours or days prior

Financial Improvements:

- The number of requested rides has increased by 8%
- The average cost per ride has decreased by 6% in FY 19
- At this pace, BIDMC could save \$7,500 annually in patient transportation with Acuity-Link

Average Number of Rides in Four Months Post Implementation



The average number of rides has increased 8% from FY 18 to FY 19

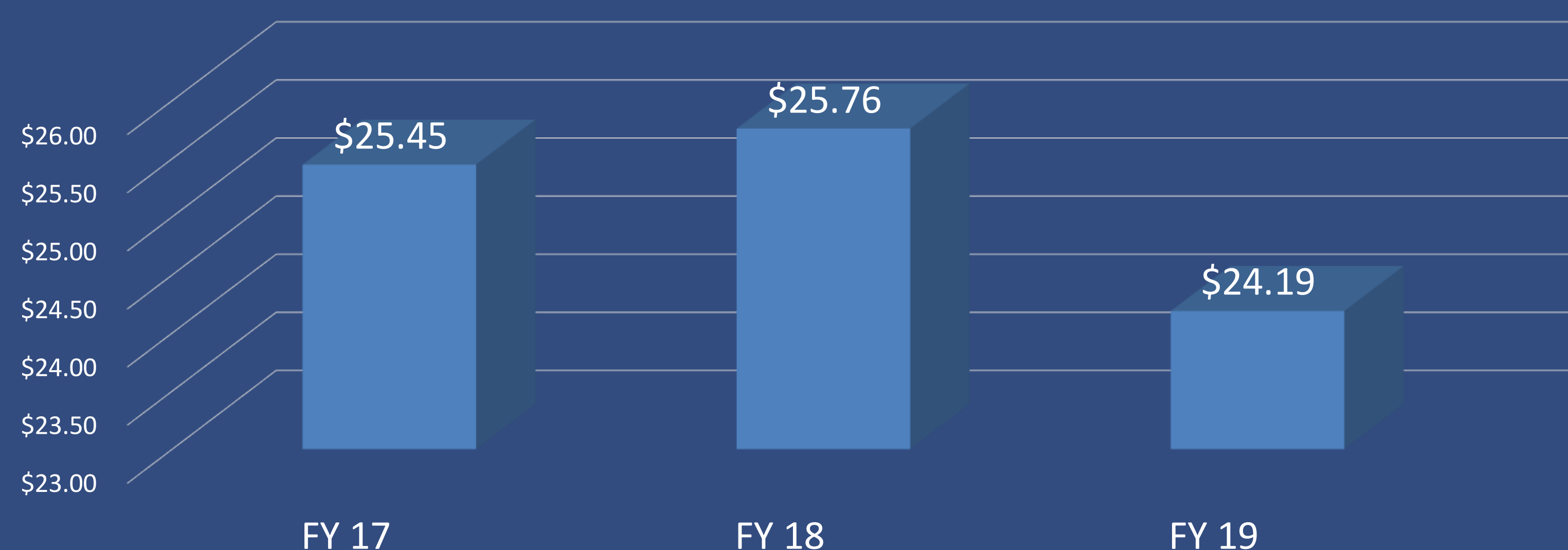
Lessons Learned

- Partnerships with hospital teams like Information Systems, Social Work, Service Ambassadors, Case Management, Nursing Administration and the Emergency Department, were key to successful implementation of the new platform
- Development of single sign-on allowed us to interface the new platform with our existing user credentials

Next Steps

- Maintain our partnership with Acuity-Link and Cataldo to monitor transports and improve the user experience for patients and staff at the Medical Center
- Implement technology in every ambulance servicing BIDMC to enhance visibility and provide accurate estimated times of arrival
- Reduce the use of and eliminate taxi vouchers for ambulatory patient transports and calls to Cataldo dispatch for scheduling of patient transports
- Continue educating end users on the use of the platform

Average Cost per Ride in Four Months Post Implementation



The average cost per ride in FY 19 has decreased 6% since instituting Acuity-Link in the first four months of FY 19

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