

CHI Owners Get INsight into Opioid Safety

THE CHALLENGE

California Healthcare Insurance Company, Inc., a Risk Retention Group (CHI)—along with its risk management subsidiary Optima Healthcare Insurance Services—prioritizes the safe and responsible use of opioids as an annual corporate program goal. Opioid safety was a natural choice for the 2017 program goal. “It’s all over the news media; it’s on every listserv that I participate in,” says Regina Vukson, RN, BSBA, CPHQ, CPHRM, senior risk consultant for Optima.

The issue of opioid safety affects all types of hospitals, from small critical access hospitals to large medical centers, whether urban facilities or rural, and CHI owner organizations have not been spared the impact.

CHI and Optima had already done a lot of work through other initiatives to improve the appropriateness of medication prescribing, but they needed help assessing the risks for opioid safety. They turned to ECRI Institute’s Insight™ Opioid Assessment, which CHI budgeted to pay for on behalf of its owners.

THE SOLUTION

CHI used the INsight Opioid Assessment to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement related to opioid practices for their owner organizations.

In Vukson’s experience, risk assessments are well worth the expense and effort because they provide direction for positive change. “The value and investment is really strong,” says Vukson. She adds that when senior leaders are committed to change and supply the necessary resources, “the sky is the limit for making improvements and reducing patient harm.”

Vukson offers three pieces of advice for organizations contemplating proactive risk assessments through INsight. First “understand how the assessment works and how it’s structured so you can get buy-in and utilize the results,” Vukson suggests.

Second, she advises organizations to maintain a “connection between risk management and information technology [IT].” The assessment is distributed electronically so coordination with IT is paramount.



Third, Vukson advises organizations to communicate with staff about the assessment and “give participants enough information ahead of time so that they understand the importance of participating” and how the results will be used.

THE RESULT

Before the assessment, many owner organizations felt they were already doing a good job with regard to opioid safety. However, the results showed that reality differed from perceptions. The findings revealed several opportunities to improve patient safety and reduce risk.

Across all the owner organizations participating in the INsight assessment, areas with the most opportunity for improvement included dispensing, quality improvement processes, prescribing, and patient monitoring. “Our results demonstrate there are a lot of systems processes that could use improvement,” says Vukson. “You can have the best policies and procedures in the world, but how safe is your environment, and do clinical decision support tools really enhance safety?”

Owner organizations have selected a few top areas to focus on, but some issues are emerging as common choices: patient assessment for and management of obstructive sleep apnea, nurse monitoring of patients receiving opioids, which medications should—or shouldn’t—be stocked in automated dispensing cabinets (ADCs), and optimizing clinical decision support and order sets.

Participants recognize that assessment is just the first step of the quality improvement cycle. Improvements take time and require a comprehensive approach to the issues, such as budgeting for technology, implementing policy changes, and conducting educational programs. Similarly, CHI and Optima will continue to track progress with the recommendations from the assessment after the project concludes. “We have long-term monitors with claims, such as metrics for frequency and severity and claim file codes for opioids,” says Vukson. CHI and Optima will assess these metrics on a semiannual basis for the next several years. “The work doesn’t just end because the end date has occurred as far as the program is concerned,” Vukson explains. “Our goal is to continually make a positive difference in healthcare.”

Contact us today.
Call (610) 825-6000, ext. 5558,
email pso@ecri.org, or
visit us at www.ecri.org/pso