

PatientCareLink: A Quality & Safety Initiative

History

In a groundbreaking, first-in-the-nation joint effort in January 2005, the Massachusetts Hospital Association (MHA) and the Organization of Nurse Leaders, MA-RI-NH (ONL) partnered with hospital executives, doctors, nurses, and advocates to deliver transparent quality and safety information to patients and other healthcare stakeholders through the *Patients First: Continuing the Commitment in Safe Care* initiative. *Patients First* was anchored by a public website that listed unit-specific hospital staffing information, quality and safety goals and accomplishments, as well as other important information designed to help patients and their loved ones become more active participants in their care.

Patients First was rebranded as *PatientCareLink (PCL)* in 2010 and continues to be dedicated to providing patients, families and caregivers with current, meaningful information on care provided by Massachusetts hospitals. To expand the scope of *PCL*, in 2013 The Home Care Alliance of Massachusetts became a co-sponsor of the site, which now includes regularly updated quality of care information from more than 100 home care agencies across the commonwealth.

Present

Today, *PCL* continues to be a bold, voluntary initiative by Massachusetts' hospitals and home health agencies that advances their longstanding commitment to provide safe and high-quality care. *PCL* commits hospitals and home care agencies to work collaboratively to create practices and innovations that enhance excellence in patient care. Hospitals have also embraced new strategies to reduce medical errors, increase safety and efficiency, expand communications, and increase transparency through publicly reported nurse staffing plans. In addition, hospitals are developing new solutions to alleviate nursing and other caregiver staff shortages. Through *PCL*, patients and families have unprecedented access to information about their local hospitals and home care agencies.

Guiding Principles

- Improve healthcare quality and safety
- Provide staffing that meets patient needs
- Make healthcare data and performance measures publicly available
- Promote workforce development
- Promote a safe, respectful and supportive working environment

PCL builds on the successes of other national quality initiatives such as National Quality Forum (NQF) performance measure development, The Joint Commission's safety goals, and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's (IHI) Model for Improvement initiatives. *PCL*, however, sets a more aggressive agenda for Massachusetts hospitals to set priorities around a common agenda of quality and safety. By signing on to *PCL*, hospitals agreed to:

- **Inform patients, their families and the public** about how nurse leaders set safe-staffing plans that meet patients' needs and, for the first time, committed hospitals to make their safe-staffing plans available to the public.
- **Provide more public information about hospitals** by publicly reporting their performance on a series of nationally recognized safety and quality measures.

The MHA Board of Trustees in 2013 unanimously endorsed an association-wide initiative to move beyond public reporting and transparency to make measurable, concrete improvements in hospitals' performance through a statewide quality improvement agenda with the aim to:

1. Reduce preventable hospital acquired conditions of Catheter Associated Urinary Tract Infections (CAUTI), Central Line Associated Blood Stream Infections (CLABSI) and Surgical Site Infections (SSI) by 40% by 2015
2. Reduce preventable readmissions by 20% by 2015

Staffing Plans

Massachusetts hospitals began voluntarily reporting nurse staffing as defined by National Database of Nursing Quality Indicators in 2006. Staffing Plans include information regarding patient care team members and each patient care unit.

At the inception of this proposal, hospitals acknowledged differences in the size, mission and values of their organizations and considered the ramifications of public reporting. Despite concerns about posting such detailed data, over time and with inclusion of all stakeholders across the state, nearly every acute care hospital, long term acute care, rehabilitation and several specialty hospitals agreed to post *planned* staffing for all hospitals for all units on every shift for every day of the week.

In addition to posting this information on the *PCL* web-site, the information was made available to all patients and staff within each facility. At the end of the first year and annually since, all hospitals also post their *actual* staffing reports and explain any significant variances from their plans.

Hospitals continue to have the opportunity to describe their units' unique characteristics, such as patient population, patient census variances, and specific patient-driven required resources that can contribute to staffing differences across hospitals. Staffing plan reporting has promoted dialogue across hospitals to benchmark their staffing and improve their staffing operations and resources. By introducing hospitals to public reporting on staffing, *PCL* has driven a culture shift away from a focus on concerns about competition and toward collaboration and transparency.

Staffing plans and reports can be found at: <http://www.patientcarelink.org/healthcare-provider-data/hospital-data/staffing-plans.aspx>

NQF Endorsed Nurse Sensitive Measures, Hospital and Home Health Compare

Massachusetts hospitals agreed to publicly report three of the NQF-endorsed nursing-sensitive care measures beginning in 2007. Through a process that engaged hospitals and other healthcare entities, the measures agreed to were Pressure Ulcer Prevalence, Patient Falls, and Falls with Injury. Hospitals in the state and across the country now regularly view the site's data on these measures for purposes of benchmarking.

Current Hospital Compare measures related to heart attack or chest pain, heart failure care, pneumonia care and prevention, surgical care improvement, stroke care, blood clot prevention and treatment, along with mortality and readmission data are also posted in the Performance Measure section of *PatientCareLink*. Hospital performance measures can be found at: <http://www.patientcarelink.org/healthcare-provider-data/hospital-data/performance-measures.aspx>

Current Home Health Compare measures were added to *PCL* in July 2013 and include timely initiation of care, patient/family education about a patient's drugs, assessment of patients' fall risk, depression status, pain levels, improvements in surgical wounds and acute care hospitalizations. Home health care measures can be found at: <http://www.patientcarelink.org/healthcare-provider-data/home-health-agency-data.aspx>

Success Stories and Improving Patient Care

The initial focus of *PCL* was on the public data posting of staffing plans and reports, nurse-sensitive performance measures, and Hospital Compare measures. Since 2010 there has been an additional focus on sharing hospital successes on their quality and safety initiatives, and providing information and resources related to the many quality initiatives led by MHA. The association has expanded the "Success Stories" section of the *PCL* site to now include examples of how Massachusetts home care agencies are affecting positive quality outcomes and partnerships. To learn more about these success stories, click on the link below.

- **Success Stories:** <http://www.patientcarelink.org/success-stories.aspx>

Massachusetts healthcare providers continually work to provide the safest possible care, and place a high priority on making performance measures transparent. They create innovations and "best practices" that enhance excellence in patient care, and perform targeted interventions in specific areas to improve the health of the patients and communities they serve. To learn about some of the many programs now underway in Massachusetts, click on the link below.

- **Improving Patient Care:** <http://www.patientcarelink.org/improving-patient-care.aspx>

For Patients & Families and Workforce

MHA, ONL, and HCA also offer extensive information to patients and families through the *For Patients & Families* section of *PCL*, including:

- Understanding *PCL*'s hospital data
- Who's who on your hospital team
- Participating in your care
- Improvement resources
- AHRQ Effective Health Care Program, consumer research summaries
- Choosing Wisely website
- Honoring Choices website
- Healthy Living Center for Excellence website

This information and more can be found at: <http://www.patientcarelink.org/for-patients-and-families.aspx>

In 2014 and 2015, MHA has conducted focus groups with various hospitals' Patient and Family Advisory Councils to solicit feedback on the *PCL* website in terms of its ease of use to the public and to get suggestions for improvement.

Pertinent workforce related resources are posted in the *Workforce* section of *PCL*, including the MHA-ONL Annual Nursing Survey Highlights, scholarship applications, educational and job opportunities, and a showcase of state and national initiatives underway in the commonwealth to expand the current workforce. Details may be found at: <http://www.patientcarelink.org/workforce.aspx>

Looking Ahead

PCL strives to educate, promote continuous improvement, and advance transparency and patient safety to constituents, organizations, and the public. Massachusetts hospital and home health colleagues who are familiar with the *PCL* initiative and its purpose regularly refer to it in various meeting venues and forums both locally and nationally.

One of MHA's 2015 - 2016 strategic priorities is to "Advance quality, patient safety and healthcare workforce initiatives through well-trained healthcare team members." *PCL* supports the MHA team's work in this area by providing public access to educational programming and support strategies that can assist healthcare providers to reduce Healthcare Acquired Conditions and readmissions. The *PCL* initiative also promotes MHA's workforce collaborative skill training, consistent with the goals of healthcare reform within the commonwealth. *PCL* will continue to post clinical performance data, share hospital and homecare success stories and improvement resources, and communicate pertinent information to patients and families, and the public.

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