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Uniontown Hospital Media Release

Uniontown Hospital at the forefront of information technology

UNIONTOWN HOSPITAL

UNIONTOWN, Pa. – Quality. Safety. Efficiency. These outcomes are the expectations of patients when they go to the hospital seeking care. And these are the outcomes that Uniontown Hospital is dedicated to ensuring through all phases of patient care, including medical records and technology. The hospital has committed to ensuring that the medical records and information needed by physicians and clinicians is streamlined and easily accessible to maintain the best care for its patients, each and every time.

To that end, Uniontown Hospital was recently honored as one of the first five hospitals in the nation to successfully attest to Meaningful Use Stage 2 after implementing new patient care technology across the facility. “Being one of the first five hospitals in the country to attest is certainly something we are proud of,” said Information Technology Executive Director Tricia Herman, who is also the Chief Information Officer at Uniontown Hospital. “Our entire team did an exceptional job. We take pride in being big enough to do it, but small enough to get it done.

Our organization’s mission is to make a healthy difference in the lives we touch by providing high quality, safe and efficient patient care, and the Meaningful Use objectives align with that mission.”

And that mission, hospital officials said, is a product of patient-centered care. “Whether it is Meaningful Use or any other program, our leadership takes a very special approach. It’s not just about checking the box to meet the regulation,” said Josh Krysak, coordinator of Community Relations for Uniontown. “A regulation or compliance issue alone doesn’t mean anything to the provider or the patient. It’s about recognizing the benefit that can come from adhering to those standards, and that’s one of the things our leadership and IT team is so good about.”

Increased patient safety and convenience

**For Immediate Release
Aug. 5 , 2014**

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By participating in the Meaningful Use Program, Uniontown Hospital is able to provide their patients with increased safety measures, convenience and seamless continuity of care.

“It is our vision at Uniontown Hospital that every patient, every day, every time, be the primary focus and concern of our staff,” CEO Steve Handy said. “The Meaningful Use achievement shows our commitment to that vision and allows us to provide another, often unseen and under-appreciated avenue of streamlined and rapid patient care to ensure the best possible outcomes and the safety of those treated at our facility.”

The implementation of a “patient portal” and the creation of a standard summary care record have resulted in simplified care coordination across different health venues.

With those systems in place, Uniontown Hospital’s patients can now access an online portal to view, download or transmit their personal health care information. It also allows them to share that information with other health care providers.

“The whole care coordination with the physicians and patients really becomes key and is one of the biggest benefits of what we’ve done to meet the Stage 2 requirements,” IT Manager Tracey Porterfield said. “The patients now have access to their health record, and they’re able to do with it what they want. Putting that clinical information in their hands is a huge win for our patients.”

With the initial Stage 1 requirements in 2011, Uniontown Hospital chose to brand the project the “Clinical Advancement Project” or CAP. The project consisted of many clinical initiatives, but three initiatives that were most impactful on patient convenience and safety were CPOE, ePrescribing and eMAR.

CPOE, computerized provider order entry, allows physicians to use the EHR to place all clinical (medication, laboratory and radiology) orders electronically. CPOE helps to eliminate transposition errors and orders are completed faster by eliminating the need to follow up with the doctors for clarification.

The electronic medication administration or eMAR, moves the documentation of patient medications from paper to the EHR. According to Porterfield, the physician and other clinical providers no longer have to look at a paper chart to find when their patient’s medications were administered. It also provides alerting for medications that are due to be administered.

“With this functionality, we implemented positive patient identification measures,” Porterfield said. “This involved putting a barcode on the patient’s wristband and on the medication. All medication administration is done using this identification methodology; the patient is identified from the wristband, the medication is identified from the packaging and both cross-reference the order that is placed in the EHR to ensure that the right medication is being given to the right patient at the right time.”

The implementation of ePrescribing, another Meaningful Use requirement, makes getting prescriptions filled quick and convenient for patients. As soon as a doctor signs a patient's prescription in the EHR, it is electronically transmitted to the patient's pharmacy resulting in reduced wait times.

"When you come out of an emergent situation, you just want to go home," Porterfield said. "With the implementation of ePrescribe, we get our patient's prescriptions to the pharmacy as quickly as possible."

As with any new functionality in a hospital, Uniontown officials said that training and education were pivotal to the facility's success.

"We had a one-day fair where we set up work stations for the physicians and nurses to use the solutions and ask questions," Porterfield said. "We have these events to connect with our employees so we have their support, which ultimately makes for a better experience for our patients."

The Meaningful Use program also includes monetary incentives for hospitals successfully attesting to meeting the metrics.

"We're leveraging the dollars to make a difference in the community," said Krysak. "The money is going right back to the patients with our planned renovations and upgrades across the facility."

Building on a foundation for success

Completing Meaningful Use Stage 2 wasn't an easy task, and the tight timeline added to the challenge. Uniontown Hospital upgraded its EHR system, Cerner Millennium, last September and started measuring against the Meaningful Use metrics in January.

"While it is an honor and tremendous accomplishment for a small independent community hospital to successfully attest and meet all of the requirements of Meaningful Use, the implementation of technology that can have a positive impact on patient care is the right thing to do," said Darlene Ferguson, R.N., Clinical Systems Specialist. "Using technology in this manner will help us improve the quality, safety and efficiency of patient care; engage the patients and family in their care and improve care coordination. Our vision from the beginning has been to use technology to enhance patient care and improve clinical outcomes."

Herman echoed that sentiment.

"We've always made good, forward thinking decisions with our technology," said Herman. "We accomplished Stage 2 because we have great leadership, hardworking and dedicated staff, made smart decisions ten years ago to implement a good, solid IT foundation and an excellent partnership with our technology provider, Cerner."

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Cerner, a Kansas City, Mo.-based market leader in health care IT, echoed the quality of the relationship between it and Uniontown Hospital.

“I commend Uniontown’s drive to achieve Meaningful Use Stage 2,” said Daphne Bascom, MD, Ph.D., vice president and chief medical information officer, Cerner.

“Uniontown’s focus has been on leveraging healthcare IT as a strategy to meet regulatory requirements while also using it as a platform to support workflow and process changes. This will help improve the quality of care for its community and enhance patient safety. Cerner is proud to partner with such a rapid adopter of new workflows and technology.”

What’s next?

Uniontown Hospital is looking forward to the release of the final requirements for Meaningful Use Stage 3, but won’t stop there. Krysak explains that the community hospital model has changed in recent years, and Uniontown Hospital is quickly adapting.

“We recognize the market is changing, and we roll with it,” Krysak said. “The key is that we get the staff all onboard with the same mission, but we want to continue to challenge them. Whether that’s with Meaningful Use Stage 3 or something else – we will be ready to face it, and it will be another project and another celebration.”

Handy said that moving forward Uniontown will remain at the forefront of medical IT and in all other services provided by the hospital.

"Uniontown Hospital is blessed with great people. The expanded use of information technology makes them even better by making clinical information readily available, by facilitating communications and by validating their actions. This all translates into better quality for our patients," Handy said. "Although we are a small hospital we make a big difference in the lives of our patients and community. Becoming one of the first hospitals in the country to accomplish this is an example of the commitment and effort that our staff brings every day to Uniontown Hospital."