Abstract:

**Background:** The current discharge process to skilled nursing facilities (SNF) from our hospital lacks standardization which results in longer length of stay (LOS), wasting of hospital resources, exposing patients to possible iatrogenic complications, and delaying the patient’s eventual return home.

**Purpose:** The objective of this project was to decrease the LOS for geriatric inpatients discharged to SNF by 0.5 days through standardization of the SNF discharge process.

**Methods:** Baseline data, for patients on the Acute Care of the Elderly (ACE) unit discharged to SNF, was collected from January-December 2013. This data showed a medium LOS for SNF discharges of 5.3 days. An interprofessional team consisting of attending physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and social workers created a process map to identify current procedure for discharging a patient to a SNF. A rapid cycle improvement event was organized consisting of inpatient providers, social workers, executive stakeholders and SNF representatives to gather input on possible interventions. From this event, four interventions were designed for initial implementation: early identification of need for SNF placement, development of an electronic brief summary of medical records, instituting a daily discharge huddle, and arrangement of transport to SNF by 10 am.

**Results and Outcomes:** At the end of our first cycle we have observed a rise in the percentage of patients discharged prior to noon from 9 to 21% and a decrease in median LOS from 5.3 to 5.0 days. Systemic observation data shows strong adherence to our process implementation elements. Survey data reveals our interventions have been well received by all team members.

Implications for practice: After our first cycle of interventions we have not yet achieved our goal of 0.5 day reduction in length of stay. A second cycle of interventions with the aim of helping patients in picking a SNF are currently being designed. Decreasing LOS to SNF can be a complicated process. Our project demonstrates that QI tools can be used effectively to improve this complex process.