



RHQN Quality Newsletter, March 2009

SCOAP expands its SCOPE across Washington State!!

SCOAP (The Surgical Care and Outcomes Assessment Program) is now being used by over 45 hospitals in Washington State and is receiving national attention for its unique approach to improving surgical care. The following RHQN member Critical Access Hospitals are SCOAP participants:

Mid Valley Hospital, Omak
Morton General Hospital, Morton
Ocean Beach Hospital, Ilwaco
Sunnyside Community Hospital, Sunnyside
United General Hospital, Sedro Wooley
Whidbey General Hospital, Coupeville

SCOAP is also happy to welcome newly joined **Lincoln Hospital, Davenport** and **Coulee Community Hospital, Grand Coulee** on board as well! For a complete list of all SCOAP hospitals go to www.scoap.org and click on the hospital involvement tab.

SCOAP is an important tool for hospitals of all sizes to track and compare performance measures in order to offer the highest quality of care to all residents of Washington State. SCOAP is already impacting negative outcomes while at the same time saving hospitals money by reducing unnecessary complications (for detailed results see www.scoap.org).

Governor Gregoire has recognized the value of SCOAP and has publicly stated her support in a proclamation that encourages all hospitals to join SCOAP. In order to help hospitals join SCOAP, the Life Sciences Discovery Fund awarded SCOAP a grant. Through this grant SCOAP is able to absorb the administrative costs for Critical Access Hospitals for the first year of participation.

For more information on the above please contact SCOAP's Justine Norwitz at jnorwitz@qualityhealth.org or on (206) 399 2621.

On the Standardizing of Hospital Codes in Washington State

The RHQN March Members Conference Call was devoted to implementation of the statewide standardized hospital code set and more importantly documenting staff competence at using the new codes. There are two major questions which pop into my head when I think about implementing an entirely new set of codes. The first is; why do it? The second is; what does it take to assure that staff is competent to use the codes?

The answer to the first question is tied to the heart of why we standardize the many aspects of patient care. We standardize because it reduces the variation which fosters errors. If we reduce errors we reduce the chances of harming patients. The 'best' care is always the 'safest' care. Standardizing isolation signage, wrist bands, codes and surgical checklists reduces the variation that increases the risk of errors.

The answer to the second question is not as straight forward. Assuring staff competence is not as easy as some think. You can't just post the codes and say "start using them". Proper use of the codes has to be so ingrained that staffs don't have to 'think' about it. Staff training has to be thorough and recurrent. The toolkit for implementation of the codes contains incredible staff training materials and documentation forms. Please take time to use them and keep them handy.

During Department of Health survey they will inquire about the facility's code set. It's not just asking one or two employees the correct code for a chemical spill or a combative patient; it's about how the facility handles staff competence training and the success of the training. Implementing new codes without thorough staff training is worse than continuing to use an old (non-standardized) code set. So, please implement the Washington State Standardized Code Set, but do it right. Don't skimp on the competence training.

Upcoming Member Conference Calls

Our April, May and June Member Conference Call topics include:

April 14: "Handling Hazardous Chemicals, the Worker Right to Know Program"

May 12: "In Pursuit of Excellence, When Is the Last Time You Reviewed Your Policies?"

June 9: "Fire Safety in the Hospital Setting, the Life Safety Code Revisited"

If you have ideas, comments, questions, need additional resources or a consultation, contact Randy Benson, RHQN Executive Director, at 206 577-1821 or randyb@wsha.org.