

Critical Response: Closing Gaps in Patient Care

Hansen Family Hospital Emergency Department | Iowa Falls, IA

Care Interventions

Critical Priority

OBJECTIVE: To improve coordination and timeliness of emergency care, enhance patient outcomes, and ensure use of resources through seamless communication, shared protocols, and effective patient transfer and preparedness efforts between Hansen Family Hospital's Emergency Department and the Iowa Falls Emergency Medical Services.

Setting The scene

BACKGROUND: Hansen Family Hospital's Emergency Department has seen a reduction in contracted CRNA coverage, thus identifying a need for protocol changes to avoid gaps in patient care and safety. An opportunity was presented for a collaboration with the Iowa Falls EMS to not only identify and address deficiencies in patient care, but to improve operational efficiency, reduce resource waste, and enhanced continuity of care, particularly during transitions to higher levels of care.

Assessing The situation

ANALYSIS: Hansen Family Hospital's Emergency Department serves as the primary entry point for acute and emergent care within our rural community. With the reduction in CRNA coverage, an internal review of protocols by hospital staff revealed areas for improvement to not only prevent delays in patient care but also identify opportunities to strengthen relationships with our local EMS and improve community outreach.

The key areas for improvement were identified as:

- Coordination and timeliness of emergency care
- Enhancement of patient outcomes across the care continuum
- Promotion of efficient use of resources
- Support of effective patient transfer processes

By The Numbers

The elimination of 24/7 CRNA call coverage in favor of a collaboration with the Iowa Falls EMS generated a monthly cost savings of \$12,885.

This provides opportunities to allocate funds elsewhere to further support patient care initiatives:

- Update equipment & protocol changes
- Staff retention & training
- Patient education & community outreach

Staff satisfaction and collaboration amongst the teams improved by at least 45%.

- Communication improved
- Pre-notification rates improved

Decrease in resource request to response time of less than 10 minutes (when assistance is needed with airway intervention/iv assistance)



ACTIONS TAKEN:

Utilization of EMS Personnel

- Collaboration with Iowa Falls EMS for advanced airway management, conscious sedation, and difficult IV starts within the Emergency Department and facility-wide

Integration of EMS Equipment into Emergency Services

- Updating Emergency protocols by incorporating equipment commonly used by EMS for continuity of care and standardization across care settings
 - **LUCAS Device:** a mechanical chest compression system utilized by Iowa Falls EMS and recently integrated into Hansen Family Hospital's emergency protocols. The LUCAS Device is designed for consistent and effective CPR, ensuring first responders and hospital teams can focus on advanced care while maintaining uninterrupted CPR.
 - **Binder Lift:** A specialized lifting device placed under the patient to help caregivers lift, turn, or reposition the patient with reduced risk of injury to both the patient and staff.
 - **ETCO2 Monitoring Equipment:** A device that measures the amount of carbon dioxide exhaled at the end of a patient's breath.
- Supporting a seamless transition from pre-hospital to in-patient care, improving both patient & provider safety through familiar, consistent tools and protocols.

Implementation of Standardized Handoff Materials

- Standardizing & updating handoff tools for use by primary and off-site clinics when transferring patients to the Emergency Department or other care facilities
- Ensures accurate communication, reduces information gaps, and supports safe, efficient continuity of care during patient transitions

Ongoing Education & Training

- Continuous collaboration and skill development through a wide range of interdisciplinary training opportunities with local community entities
 - Intraosseous (IO) Drill Utilization
 - Obstetric Simulations
 - Mission: Lifeline Stroke Education
 - Binder Lift Training
 - LUCAS Device Use
 - IV Pump Competency
 - HazMat Decontamination Procedures
- Additional community outreach initiatives further promote public education and strengthen partnerships between healthcare providers and the community
 - LIFE class, RAGBRAI support, Bike Rodeo events & more

Collaborative Debriefings to Enhance Learning and Patient Care

Action Plan For Sustainability

Success was demonstrated through improved communication reliability, increased adherence to clinical protocols, and reduced time to critical interventions following implementation of EMS-ER collaboration strategies.

NEXT STEPS

Hansen Family Hospital's Emergency Services Team will continue to assess current care processes and proactively identify future-state needs to ensure high-quality patient care.

- Interdisciplinary debriefings with hospital departments and EMS staff to enhance learning and strengthen response
- Consistent review of metrics to monitor current processes and identify areas for improvement
- Review patient feedback

