



**George Higgins III,
MD, FACEP**
Chief Medical Officer and
Vice President, Medical Affairs

MEASURING HEALTHCARE EXCELLENCE

Maine Medical reduces patient length of stay while enhancing quality of care using SAS®

Industry

Healthcare, Life Sciences

Business Issue

Reduce length of stay; improve quality of care.

Solution

SAS® Strategic Performance Management for Healthcare.

Benefits

Reduced average length of stay by almost a day.

“With SAS, we’re able to connect the really sound, good regulatory expectations to our practice. Our patients benefit, and so do we.”

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A hospital patient in a double room changes beds when her roommate is discharged. Miscommunication and the resulting misinformation lead to an unnecessary blood transfusion for that patient, who dies as a result. Maine Medical Center’s George Higgins III, MD, FACEP, recalls hearing about this incident occurring in another US hospital. To him, that’s the sort of tragedy that a strategic performance management (SPM) solution could have prevented.

That’s why Higgins, Chief Medical Officer/Vice President for Medical Affairs and Professor of Emergency Medicine, headed his hospital’s implementation of SAS Strategic Performance Management for Healthcare. Using SAS, the 606-bed tertiary care and teaching hospital in Portland, Maine, has an automated way to measure clinical and business performance with the goal of enhancing the quality of patient care.

“We’ve always had lots of information about finances and operations, but our board of trustees wanted to hear more about outcomes, quality, safety, satisfaction and adverse events,” Higgins recalls. “That motivated us to begin the process of measuring what we do in a balanced way.”

With SAS, Maine Medical measures, reports and monitors key performance indicators (KPIs) such as length of stay, patient satisfaction, physician satisfaction, patient falls and direct computerized physician order entry rate. “By focusing more globally on length of stay, Maine Medical has seen the average

patient stay drop by nearly one full day while maintaining the highest levels of patient care,” Higgins says. “This increases our bed capacity, as if we had virtually constructed a new 50 to 100 bed unit.”

24/7 scorecard access

Pulling from seven different data sources, Maine Medical’s SPM application builds a transparent and widely shared scorecard, available to employees 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

“We realize that if people have to wait a month or two for information, they may deem it as no longer valid,” explains Debra Tillotson, Director of Maine Medical’s Center for Performance Improvement. “With SAS, we can publish daily if we choose to, and even the people who work evening and night shifts have access to the information.”



Maine Medical measures 50 KPIs that come from all across the hospital, including research and education as well as such everyday operations as finance. Just making hospital staff aware of the scorecard indicators influences their practices, which improves quality of care, Tillotson says. Gleaning intelligence from the different data points has led to fewer patient falls, which has reduced physical, emotional and financial injury.



Debra Tillotson

Director, Center for Performance Improvement

Individuals taking ownership

Nosocomial, or hospital-acquired, infection rates have fallen as well. SAS helps the staff see correlations between specific diagnoses and nosocomial infection rates, thus allowing the staff to take corrective actions that prevent longer hospital stays.

“We know that length of stay may increase, for example, when a patient acquires an infection,” Tillotson says. “Using SAS, we know when to take certain actions that will reduce that particular indicator, so we believe that we’ve been able to reduce hospital-acquired infections, save hospital days and avoid patient dissatisfaction and risk management intervention.”

The orthopedic staff members knew that length of stay was greater than it should be, based on national benchmarks, but they never really knew whether they were taking

the right corrective action. With SAS, the staff can see whether the changes are working from week to week and month to month.

In fact, one member of the orthopedic staff came up with her own plan for patient care that, in just six months, resulted in dropping a half-day from the average length of stay – and proved that individuals, not just groups, can make a difference using the SAS scorecard.

Information readily available

In addition to quality-of-care concerns, inpatient management challenges are also financial in nature because staff must always do more with less as efficiently as possible. Just because a patient’s length of stay increases doesn’t mean Medicare will foot the entire bill.

With a simple click on the internal Web site, hospital staff can see instantly what impact a change might have. Easy, intuitive navigation

allows anyone, regardless of his or her level of computer knowledge, to use the SAS scorecard.

SAS allows Maine Medical to easily focus on measures reviewed during hospital walk-throughs by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). The hospital staff monitors their scorecards to always be up to date on the information that JCAHO deems important. When the surveyors show up for a visit, the staff has easy access to the most current information.

“What’s important to the Joint Commission is precisely how we want to practice safe care,” Higgins says. “Our scorecard allows us to do that. With SAS, we’re able to connect the really sound, good regulatory expectations to our practice. Our patients benefit, and so do we.”



**THE
POWER
TO KNOW**

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