

Emergency Department High Utilization at San Antonio Regional Hospital



Background:

San Antonio Regional Hospital is an award-winning acute-care hospital offering advanced medical care for residents throughout the Inland Empire. The 363-bed hospital offers a full range of medical services with three intensive care units, a 52-bed emergency department with private treatment rooms, and the latest advances in medical and surgical care. The hospital treats over 200,000 patients annually, and its emergency department (ED) is one of the busiest in San Bernardino County.

Problem:

- High utilization of the ED for non-emergency care leads to unnecessary use of resources, increased costs, and patients not receiving care for their truly important needs. Additionally, underlying issues cannot be adequately addressed in the ED setting such as mental health, case management, social work, referrals, etc.

Background:

- A hospital, of similar size as SARH, conducted a study and intervention to address ED overutilization.
- They identified 158 super-utilizers, and enrolled them in a case management program.
- Resulted in a reduction in ED visits by 49% and inpatient admissions by 39%. Additionally, savings from reductions in the utilization of costly diagnostic services were seen.
- Overall, the hospital reduced ED and Inpatient length-of-stay by 39%, freeing up resources and beds for other patients.

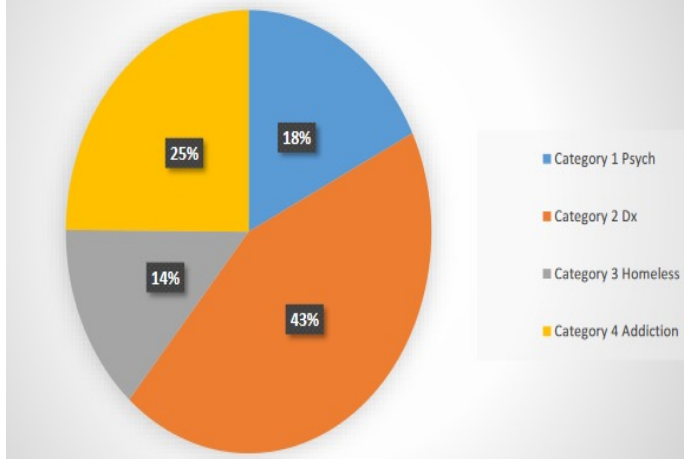
Proposed Solution:

- SARH already has the infrastructure and personnel within their CARE4U discharge clinic needed to carry out a pilot program that will address a patient's true healthcare needs, including pertinent social ones.

Our Patient Population:

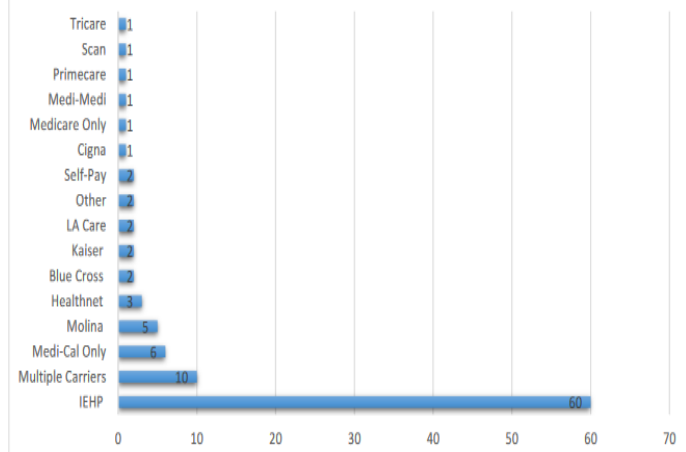
- The top 100 super-utilizers from June to December 2023 were identified for further analysis. Those who were minors or had died were excluded.
- Based on current literature, four categories were chosen: Behavioral health (Psych), Complex/Chronic Diagnosis (Dx), Living Situation (Homeless), Substance Abuse (Addiction).

Categories of Top 100 ED High Utilizers



- Some health insurances either have community health programs or will help cover the costs. By analyzing each patient's health insurance, we can also identify and facilitate the use of available community health programs or resources.

Insurance of Top 100 ED High Utilizers



Creation of the Pilot Program



Identification

- The top 100 ED utilizers from June to December 2023 were identified.
- Patients that were deceased or later expired were excluded.

Determining Needs

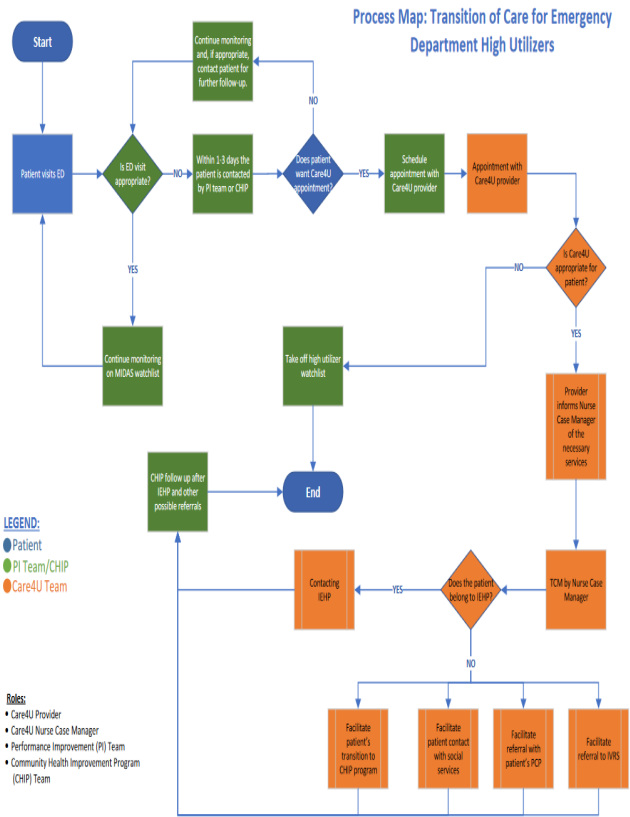
- Extensive chart review for each patient in the top 100 utilizers.
- Using a root cause analysis (RCA) tool, the needs of each patient were determined and categorized accordingly.

Selection

- The team holistically reviewed each patient’s medical needs.
- Those whose needs could be addressed by the pilot program and the resources available were selected.

Pilot Program

- Patients’ ED utilization was monitored through the MIDAS email notification system.
- Any recent ED visits were reviewed and, if non-emergent, the patient would be contacted for a follow-up visit with the pilot program.



The process map detailing each step of the pilot program.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

We were also able to identify gaps in the continuum of care, especially with those who had access to resources through their insurance. Knowing this allows us to facilitate and connect patients to the available resources through community healthcare organizations and partners. To address the immediate concern of overutilization, a pilot program was developed with the collaboration of the CARE4U clinic.

Identifying the true needs of these patients has allowed the hospital to further its understanding of the needs of its community. We suggest that the organization utilize this information in order to acquire further funding through grants. This will enable the creation of a more robust program that will better meet the true needs of our patients and their communities.

