

Meadows Regional: Tele-ICU Helps Achieve an “A” Leapfrog Safety Grade, Reduce Unnecessary Transfers

The Need: Ventilator Management for High Acuity Patients

ICU patient acuity at the rural Georgia hospital had steadily increased. More patients needed ventilators and were staying on them longer. High utilization during flu season often resulted in as many as 5-6 patients on ventilators in the ICU, up from the previous average of 1-3. The increased demand often led to the hospital transferring patients to tertiary facilities up to 100 miles away.

While two pulmonary intensivists managed care for ventilated patients on weekdays and each covered one weekend per month, two weekends each month were left uncovered.

The lack of consistent coverage had resulted in a disappointing “C” Leapfrog grade. Improving that score was a top priority.

The Solution: Eagle TeleIntensivists

With Eagle, a core team of tele-intensivists share ICU patient care management with on-site intensivists and hospitalists. The Eagle team covers the night and weekend gaps in ICU staffing and is available to assist with patient diagnosis and treatment.

Nine months after program implementation, results are strong across the board. The increase in ventilator days from 44.3 to 49.6 is a clear measure that the hospital is keeping more ventilated patients. Additionally, the hospital is more efficiently weaning patients off ventilators, measured by the decrease in average ICU length of stay from 4.7 days to 4.5. Patient acuity levels are being downgraded more efficiently allowing the hospital to open ICU beds quicker and maintain optimum census levels.

Leapfrog standards are also up. Eagle helped the hospital improve to an “A” in less than a year’s time. Previously, patients were only rounded on once daily. Now, ICU patients are evaluated in the morning, and again at night. This gives nursing staff stronger direction and added confidence as they attend to patients on their shifts. The hospital’s intensivists now have greater flexibility and a comfort in knowing they leave their patients in the best possible hands when they take time off. **Employee satisfaction scores have increased, especially among nighttime nursing staff.**

“We thought we might see a different face each time, but our Eagle team is a core group of three or four intensivists we see regularly. Nursing staff has a real camaraderie with them.”

- Karen McColl, MD, VP of Medical Affairs, Chief Medical Officer



An “A” Leapfrog Safety Grade



Total Ventilator Days Up



24/7 Coverage and Support