



CASE STUDY: ASCENSION NORTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGION

Ascension North Central Wisconsin Region Virtually Eliminates ID Transfers with Eagle Tele-ID

Ascension St. Michael's Hospital in Stevens Point, WI, is part of an eight-hospital Ascension region in north central Wisconsin. In early 2019, it was named one of the Top 20 Rural Community Hospitals in the country by the National Rural Health Association.



THE CHALLENGE

Ascension St. Michael's and the seven other hospitals in Ascension's North Central Wisconsin region needed to find new ways to reduce the number of patients being transferred out of system. After one of their infectious disease (ID) specialists left St. Michael's, clinical leadership realized the gap in ID coverage was a major reason the facility was transferring 50% of its patients needing ID consultation to hospitals out of network; sometimes to hospitals in Madison, more than an hour away.

Hospitalists and specialty care physicians on staff were becoming more vocal about the need for ID support. Telephone consultations with specialists weren't enough. "You need to be able to look at the wound to know how to deal with it," said Dr. Vimarsh Raina, an experienced TeleHospitalist who is Ascension's Medical Director for Virtual Care. He and Dr. Robyn Schertz, MD Vice President of Medical Affairs, agreed that a Tele-ID program could be the answer.

THE SOLUTION

Eagle Telemedicine's Tele-ID program went live at Ascension St. Clare's December 11, 2018, with rollout to Ascension St. Michael's the following week. Implementation across the other hospitals in the system came easily in the new year, even with the multiple EMRs, systems and processes involved.

The facilities' clinical teams saw an immediate impact: a meningitis patient who undoubtedly would have been transferred outside the system were it not for the Eagle Tele-ID physicians was able to be cared for locally. Patients suffering from sepsis, osteomyelitis and other infections are now more likely to be able to stay in their hometown hospital in the North Central Wisconsin Ascension system, all of which are now well-equipped to manage the supervised dosing of antibiotics for complicated infections and other care required by ID patients.

Once patients are discharged, the Tele-ID physician is available by phone to consult with the patient's primary care physician should any questions arise.

THE RESULTS

- **Transfers Decreased:** After review of a sample of charts at St. Clare's, at least 50% of its ID patients would have transferred without Tele-ID. "What we saved [by keeping the patients] far exceeded what we paid for the Tele-ID service," said Dr. Schertz.
- **Patient Acceptance:** Acceptance by patients of all ages "has astounded all of us," she said. The patients appreciate the time the ID specialist spends with them on their home turf. Clinical staff, too, have embraced the program, which Ascension St. Michael's credits to the quality of the Eagle physician consulting team.
- **Continued Growth:** Ascension St. Michael's is considering setting up a clinic for outpatient telemedicine ID consultations to support primary care providers in meeting complex patient care needs, offering post-hospitalization follow up and preventing readmissions.

KEY BENEFITS & OUTCOMES

- ✓ **Reduced ID transfers from 50% to 0%**
- ✓ **Savings exceed program costs**
- ✓ **Easy rollout for 8 hospitals, multiple EMRs**

"Becker's Hospital Review included us in its 100 Great Community Hospitals in 2018. The kind of support that we get from Tele-ID will continue to drive that level of excellence."

ROBYN SCHERTZ, MD
VICE PRESIDENT OF MEDICAL AFFAIRS

Eagle Telemedicine's Tele-ID program provides hospitals with a sustainable ID solution for the long term.

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