



Brookings
HEALTH SYSTEM



A CHW's Time & Resources Gives Patient A Better Understanding of Health System and Eases Anxiety

The Brookings Health System's Community Health Worker (CHW) Program Aids in Improving Quality of Life for Patients

Brookings Health System's CHW Program focuses on providing CHW services to frequent utilizers of the Emergency Room as well as patients with repeat hospital stays. The goals of the program are to decrease hospital readmissions, decrease unnecessary ER visits, and increase visits to primary care services.

PATIENT BACKGROUND

An elderly patient was admitted to BHS's inpatient unit for a variety of reasons. Many of the challenges this elderly patient faces are communication barriers due to extreme hearing loss, living alone, little family support, frequent ED usage, and high anxiety regarding medical bills.

Upon discharge, a referral was made to BHS's CHW Program to improve the situation and reduce ED visits and hospitalizations.

SERVICES PROVIDED

To help with the patient's communication barriers, the CHW accompanied the patient to a hearing aid appointment and helped the patient obtain a dry-erase whiteboard and markers. The patient stated visitors had been using pen and paper but large quantities of paper had been used and accessibility to more was difficult. The patient was excited about having a reusable option.

“SINCE WORKING WITH BHS'S CHW, THE PATIENT'S ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE HAS IMPROVED AND THEIR ED USAGE HAS DECREASED.”

The CHW educated the patient with Brookings Health System's Zone Education to give the patient a better understanding of appropriate ED usage as opposed to primary or urgent care at the clinic. The CHW also provided general health education on healthy eating and physical activity.

Finally, to help ease some of the patient's anxiety, the CHW assisted the patient in sorting mail, applying for financial assistance, and arranging a payment plan with the BHS billing department.

PATIENT SUCCESS

Since working with BHS's CHW, the patient's ability to communicate has improved and their ED usage has decreased. The patient also voiced lower anxiety due to having a payment plan for medical bills in place, thus avoiding collections. We do want to note that the CHW is continuing to work on establishing companion visits for the patient.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Active enrollment/participation in the CHW program was from May 3 – July 14, 2022, with approximately 10 home visits and one provider accompanied visit.

The CHW collaborated with the patient's already established DSS long-term services case worker to provide care coordination. Prior to the CHW's services, the patient had been receiving in-home care assistance with medications, bathing, and housework. The DSS case worker and the CHW completed a joint visit to assist in effective communication and care and the patient is continuing to receive the in-home care.

Brookings Health System serves the needs of Brookings and the surrounding communities. The health system includes the 49-bed Brookings Hospital, a 79-bed skilled nursing home, The Neighborhoods at Brookview, congregate living apartments for seniors, Brookhaven Estates, Arlington Medical Center, White Medical Clinic, Volga Medical Clinic and Yorkshire Eye clinic.

Brookings Health System is a non-profit, city-owned health system that offers the community a full range of inpatient, outpatient, surgery, home health, and extended care services.

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