

Overview

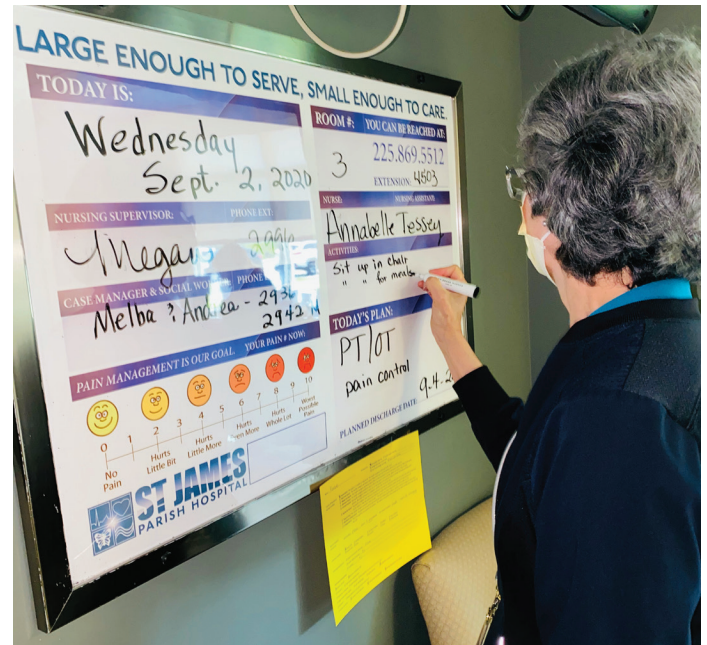
St. James Parish Hospital committed to becoming an Age-Friendly Health System in August 2019. It formed a multidisciplinary team to implement the 4Ms framework —what matters, medications, mentation and mobility — into patient care, first focusing on its inpatient unit. Despite limited resources and staff, the hospital has successfully implemented and spread age-friendly concepts. This work has contributed to decreased hospital readmissions and falls with injury, and increased cost savings.

A 25-bed critical access hospital located in Lutcher, Louisiana, between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, St. James Parish Hospital is committed to its mission of “providing excellent, quality and compassionate care.” The multidisciplinary team’s aim was that by April 2020 the hospital would articulate how it operationalizes age-friendly care and provide 4Ms care to 75 patients. That goal was adjusted due to COVID-19, and the team continues to make progress.

Approach

The multidisciplinary team for ensuring age-friendly care at St. James Parish Hospital consists of case managers, pharmacists, care coordinators, physical therapists and a project lead who is part of the leadership team. The hospital began its journey by educating nursing staff. Education began on its only acute care nursing unit, which includes patients that need skilled and acute care.

The hospital team also introduced age-friendly concepts to its patient advisory committee. Pharmacists, rehabilitation specialists/physical therapists, case managers, care coordinators and nurses began to spread the 4Ms framework in their departments and educate other staff. The care team realized it was already addressing the

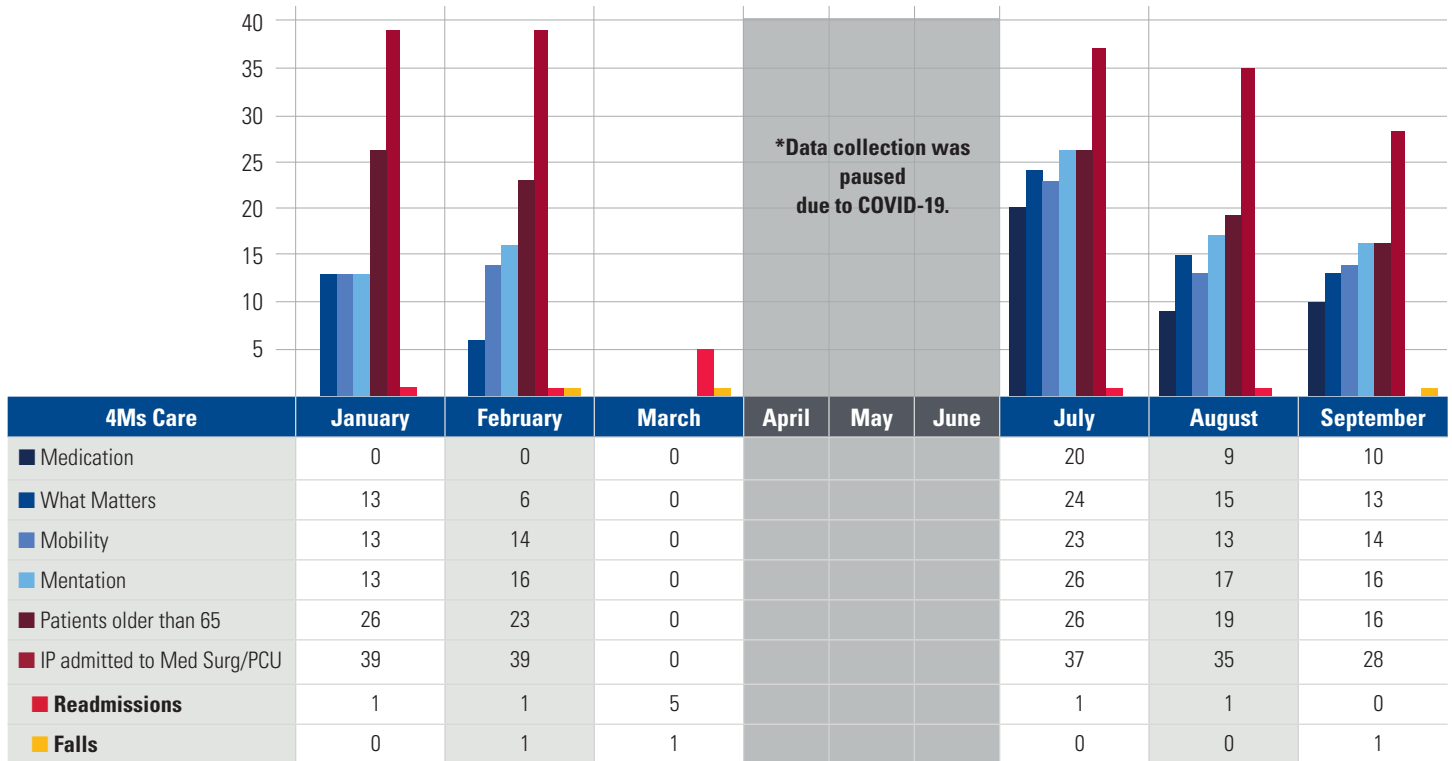


4Ms framework with its skilled patients, but not using the same wording. The team quickly adopted what matters, medications, mentation and mobility.

The hospital’s inpatient unit team carefully assesses the needs of older adult patients when they arrive. Through an updated admission process, a team member asks each older adult patient key questions to get information about their recent hospitalizations, caregivers, home environment and current functional status. Someone on the nursing team has a conversation with each older adult patient to assess “what matters” most to them. The case management team is notified automatically about these patient-specific goals.

Patients receiving skilled care participate in a weekly meeting with their interdepartmental clinical care team and their patient advocate or chosen family member. These meetings allow the team to discuss clinical care plans and progress while giving the patient an opportunity to ask questions and discuss personal goals.

4Ms CARE 2020



The hospital’s physical therapy team created and implemented a special program to get bed-bound patients moving early and often. In addition, when medications are ordered, the pharmacy team clearly identifies if a patient’s mobility or mentation could be affected.

Patients over age 65 also are assessed each shift for any episodes of delirium, and symptoms such as confusion, drowsiness or disorientation are documented and reviewed. The care team keeps communication boards updated in patient rooms, with information that includes an expected discharge date and the activities planned for each day.

Outcomes

The care team tied several of its fiscal year 2021 goals to measuring progress in providing age-friendly care. As part of its management plan, the team was already working on reducing patient falls and readmissions. Adopting the 4Ms framework was slower than anticipated in the beginning of 2020; then in March 2020, the hospital started seeing COVID-19 cases.

From January to September 2020, readmissions across the hospital decreased 62% (see 4Ms CARE chart above), with a cost savings of \$93,000. Falls with injury have continued to decrease. The care team began using new tools, including a new assessment that helps nurses identify patients at higher risk for injury. Front-line staff also have better communications tools to share this information with all team members, helping prevent patient falls.

In August 2020, St. James Parish Hospital began having new employee orientation again, which it had paused after the onset of COVID-19. At this time, the team began to introduce the Age-Friendly Health Systems concept to new employees. In November 2020, the care team presented to the hospital’s governing board the work to date on becoming an Age-Friendly Health System. From the beginning of the journey, the leadership team was on board and quickly approved any changes to documentation, including changes to the electronic health record and nursing documentation. Additional educational documents were added to improve bed mobility.

Next Steps and Lessons Learned


When the COVID-19 pandemic began, the care team faced many challenges, like those at other hospitals. The hospital limited visitors to help prevent spread of the coronavirus, so family members were unable to visit patients. The care team used phone calls and FaceTime to keep communicating with families, physicians and nurses.

As a critical access hospital, St. James Parish Hospital is small and has limited resources. Employees at the hospital wear many different hats. In addition, the hospital, clinic and emergency room currently have different electronic health record systems. This has made it more difficult to spread age-friendly concepts. The hospital currently is working toward implementing one EHR campuswide by August 2021. And despite limited resources and staff, the hospital has adjusted and successfully implemented and spread age-friendly concepts.

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Age-Friendly Health Systems is an initiative of The John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) in partnership with the American Hospital Association and the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA).