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PRIMARY CARE COMMUNITY UNITES TO PROVIDE 7-DAY FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENTS FOR HOSPITALIZED PATIENTS, REDUCING AVOIDABLE READMISSIONS IN CAMDEN

Providers agreed to take the 7-Day Pledge; results published in JAMA Network Open show a significant reduction in avoidable readmissions

CAMDEN, NJ - In an article published today in the American Medical Association's *JAMA Network Open* journal, the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers showed that when patients followed up with primary care providers within seven days of discharge from the hospital, their readmission rates were significantly lower after both 30 and 90 days. By facilitating connections to primary care, the 7-Day Pledge program ensures that patients receive necessary care after their hospitalizations. The successful results could not have been possible without collaboration from partners throughout Camden, including the primary care practices that participate in the program.

"Interest in complex care has been growing among healthcare innovators who are hungry for empirical results," said **Camden Coalition CEO Kathleen Noonan**. "Our care team has always seen the difference it makes when patients visit their primary care providers soon after discharge, and now we have solid evidence that this approach reduces hospital utilization. We're especially proud of the coalition of hospitals, primary care providers, and community members who contributed to the project. These results show not only the importance of a seven-day follow-up, but also the power of collaboration."

The program is made possible by the Camden Coalition Health Information Exchange, a data-sharing platform that allows staff to identify eligible patients and approach them at the hospital bedside or by phone. The Camden Coalition's care team then arranges transportation, makes reminder calls, and distributes gift cards to patients after their appointments. Practices that take the 7-Day Pledge are incentivized to schedule the appointments, and attend monthly meetings with care team members to discuss progress. The Camden Coalition partners with Cooper University Health Care, Jefferson Health's three New Jersey hospitals, Lourdes Health System, Virtua Health, and several primary care practices.



Camden residents praised the program, noting the difference rapid follow-up with primary care can make to the community's health and wellbeing.

"Since the 7-Day Pledge program began, my family and I have made it our priority to see our primary care doctors within a week of leaving the hospital," said **Rev. Yvonne Lawrence Sims**, a member of the Camden Coalition Community Advisory Committee. "Our providers have helped us manage our chronic conditions, even after one of us had a health episode. With the 7-Day Pledge, we've taken control of our health."

Primary care providers who took the 7-Day Pledge applauded the program and today's results.

"Since the implementation of the 7-Day Pledge program, CAMcare has seen more patients in the office and has subsequently helped to decrease the number of avoidable hospital utilizations for our patients," said **CAMcare Program Coordinator Whitney Allen, MHA**. "The continued collaboration with the team at the Camden Coalition has shown how important coordinated care is in the goal of providing our patients with quality, comprehensive, patient-centered care."

"These results are extremely encouraging for our primary care providers working every day to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Camden," said **Medical Director of Population Health Mark Angelo, MD, FACP of Cooper University Health Care**, which operates three of the practices that took the 7-Day Pledge. "We're proud that the progress we've made as a community is being recognized in *JAMA Network Open*."

"The fact that the 7-Day Pledge is a citywide commitment to reducing hospital readmissions is the key to its success," said **Dr. Jeffrey Kleeman of Fairview Village Family Practice**. "With the support of the Camden Coalition and the city's other primary care practices, we've seen great improvements in continuity of care for our most vulnerable patients."

"The 7-Day Pledge has been valuable in helping us reconnect with our patients after they leave the hospital," said **Deb Bokas, MSW, LCSW of Osborn Family Health Center**, an affiliate of Lourdes Health System. "The services and resources the care team provides make it possible for us to give our patients the timely care that they need."

"It shows what a group of dedicated people and organizations can do when we work together toward a common goal," said **Dr. Lynda Bascelli of Project H.O.P.E.** "We thank the Camden Coalition's care team who are the glue that holds this program together, and we look forward to seeing more great results from this great city."

"We could see the difference it made, and the knowledge that other providers were going through the same changes showed us that we were all involved in something bigger," said **Phyllis Fishbein, APN, MSN, MBA of Reliance Medical Group**. "One of the major challenges



in healthcare today is how to overcome the social barriers that exist to providing care, and this is an important step forward.” Her colleague, **Office Manager Rayza Peralta** added, “The support and encouragement we got for changing the way we schedule patients were important to making the program work.”

“When healthcare providers get together, share data, and commit to moving evidence-based interventions forward, our patients win,” said **Dr. Amit Bhalodia of Virtua Health**. “The results of the evaluation show what we in primary care have known all along; rapid follow-up with primary care can lower hospital utilization and benefit the health and wellbeing of our patients.”

JAMA Network Open is an international peer-reviewed journal published weekly by the American Medical Association. Part of the JAMA Network family of journals, *JAMA Network Open* spotlights research on healthcare innovation, health policy, clinical care, and global health. Articles published in the journal are open access and available immediately at publication.

“Our goal is to work together with primary care practices across the city to ensure whole-person care that improves health and avoids unnecessary utilization,” said **Social Work Manager Mary Pelak of the Camden Coalition**’s clinical redesign team. “The collaboration was key, and it’s something we can all be proud of. We started the 7-Day Pledge with the theory that rapid connection to primary care would best serve our patients who’ve been hospitalized. It’s good to see the data back up the theory, and that people around the country are taking notice.”

About the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers

The Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers is a multidisciplinary nonprofit organization working to improve care for people with complex health and social needs in Camden, NJ and across the country. The Camden Coalition works to advance the field of complex care by implementing evidence-based interventions and piloting new models that address chronic illness and social barriers to health and wellbeing. Supported by strong data, cross-sector convening, and shared learning, our community-based programs deliver better care to the most vulnerable individuals in Camden and beyond.

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