

THE FACTS

Company: JFK Medical Center

Location: Atlantis, Florida

Focus: Community hospital providing acute care medicine and surgery

Peer Review Approach: Uses external peer review as a systematic performance evaluation and quality assurance tool to meet OPPE standards

Using Allmed Since: 2007

Website: <http://www.jfkmc.com/>



The JFK Medical Center has implemented its own process as one of several methods to meet the Joint Commission's new standards for ongoing professional practice evaluation (OPPE). Since defining a process for randomly selecting cases for ongoing physician evaluation and partnering with an external review organization to assist them, JFK has diminished conflict of interest, and improved the educational aspects gained from outside evaluations.

Staffed by more than 500 physicians, 2200 healthcare professionals and 300 volunteers, JFK Medical Center is a 424-bed community hospital that offers high-quality acute-medical and surgical care. It also runs a specialized healthcare complex for cardiovascular, neuroscience, oncology, orthopedic and bariatric care.

The 40-year-old community hospital ranks among the best in the nation for its service and team professionalism. The Joint Commission has consistently certified JFK Medical Center as an advanced primary stroke center. JFK Medical Center also received a Consumer Choice Award from the National Research Corporation, noting it as the most preferred hospital for overall quality and image for West Palm Beach.

The medical center serves an elderly population and plans to add 36 licensed beds in the near future. As the hospital increases its patient population, it works continually to improve the quality of care for all of its patients.

The Challenge: Meeting Joint Commission Standards for Ongoing Physician Evaluations

The Joint Commission's 2008 redefinition of physician evaluations changes the way hospitals must assess their doctors' performance and implicitly expands the role of peer review. As part of this expanded role, the Joint Commission has asked hospitals to conduct continuing and ongoing reviews of all of its physicians.

In response, JFK Medical Center has designed its own process to reduce conflict of interest issues, improve its quality of care, increase physician accountability, make evaluations more transparent and emphasize the continuing educational aspects of all evaluations.

The Solution: Systematic External Peer Review

"We wanted to be proactive about meeting the Joint Commission's new standards for ongoing peer review," said Linda Anderson, the director of quality at JFK Medical Center. She developed an ongoing review process supported by her CEO. "Because cost can be a factor in deciding to perform external peer review, it takes a proactive hospital CEO to get a program like this going," she said.

Anderson noted that the hospital also wanted to avoid any conflict of interest concerns about its ongoing reviews and decided against using staff physicians for many of its doctors' cases. Needing to find a way to manage ongoing reviews externally for cardiac services, closed or small departments such as anesthesiology and the emergency department, Anderson has designed and scheduled a routine for pulling and reviewing cases for each department, including specific volumes of different types of cases.

Four times a year, JFK Medical Center sends cases from these departments to AllMed Healthcare Management for external peer review. By rotating the hospital's departmental reviews and then

scheduling when they are sent out, Anderson has found a workable process that also supports the Joint Commission's ongoing physician review requirements.

With the CEO's approval, Anderson has set up an annual calendar and a process for identifying cases from selected departments and submitting them for external review. To meet the new ongoing physician evaluation standard, the hospital rotates department physicians through the review procedure a few times each year. In addition, should noticeable patterns emerge among the cases going to JFK's internal peer review committee, the hospital will seek an objective external evaluation.

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The Outcome: Improved Practitioner Performance & Quality of Care

AllMed's team of board-certified, actively practicing specialists evaluate each case for practice-specific process and charting, as well as other quality issues, including whether a complication, re-admission or sentinel event occurred in the case. For cases flagged for a focused review, AllMed provides an in-depth hospital peer review report.

When AllMed returns the external peer review cases, a JFK physician assesses each one to determine whether the hospital agrees or disagrees with the determination. "Ninety-nine percent of the time, we agree," Anderson said. When the hospital agrees, the reviewing doctor assigns a level of severity to the case and places it in a physician-reviewed file.

When an external peer review returns, the hospital presents all the information and research that went into the review at a peer review committee meeting and evaluates if the medical staff would benefit from continuing education based on review findings.

According to Anderson, much can be achieved by implementing department-level training in lieu of singling physicians out. In addition, the hospital decreases some of the conflict inherent in its efforts for continuously improving its quality of care. "For peer review, you must get buy-in and support from your physicians," says Anderson. "And when you're able to show your doctors evidence-based reviews, you will have their support."

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About AllMed Healthcare Management

Founded in 1995, AllMed is a URAC-accredited independent review organization (IRO) serving leading hospital groups, insurance payers and medical management firms nationwide. Board-certified specialists in active practice conduct AllMed's evidence-based medical reviews. AllMed's clients include leading national hospital chains, ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs), critical access hospitals and regional healthcare organizations. For information about AllMed, visit the company's website at www.allmedmd.com.

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