

TeamHealth Case Study

Sutter Solano Medical Center, Vallejo, California

Enhancing patient care through a rapid response team

The Challenge

Sutter Solano Medical Center and its hospital medicine partner, TeamHealth, were looking for a way to champion the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's "100,000 Lives" campaign. A major component of the campaign is the use of a Rapid Response Team (RRT)—a team of clinicians who brings critical care expertise direct to the patient's bedside.

Our Solutions

Sutter Solano and TeamHealth agreed that the hospital medicine group was a natural fit for spearheading an RRT program. The goal was to provide an immediate response for a deterioration in status of patients who are not in the emergency department (ED) or intensive care unit (ICU). The RRT process differs from a Code Blue in that it is called before cardio-pulmonary arrest occurs, with the goal being to prevent the patient's status from escalating to the Code Blue stage. Several criteria trigger RRT activation, including deterioration of vital signs, an altered level of consciousness, shortness of breath, subtle changes in blood pressure or pulse, or the simple observation that the patient "just doesn't look good."

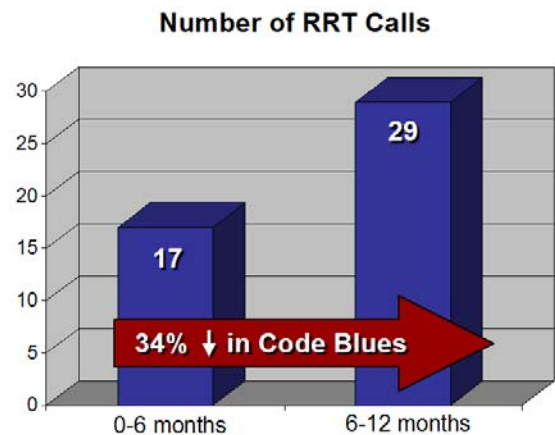
"One of the key factors of this program's success is the fact that the hospitalist is the first responder," says Dr. Susan Waters, medical director of the hospital medicine program. Unique to this program is that the hospitalist assumes responsibility for the situation and directs all personnel on the team, but it is important to note that the RRT members always defer to the attending physician when applicable. One final aspect of this program is that all Code Blues are reviewed by the Code Blue Committee to determine whether the RRT could have averted the code.

The Results

During the first 6 months of the program, there was total of 17 RRT calls. In the following 6 months, there were 29 RRT calls. During the first year of using the RRT, the number of Code Blue calls outside of the ED and ICU declined 34%.

Proven advantages of Sutter Solano's RRT program include:

- Improved patient care by rescuing patients prior to a full-blown cardio-pulmonary arrest
- Expedited transfer of patients to the ICU when appropriate
- Demonstration to the community that the hospital is committed to patient safety
- Enhanced ability for the hospital to recruit and retain nursing staff



Client Response

"The rapid response program led by Dr. Susan Waters is an excellent example of hospital-based physician collaboration and leadership.

In addition to improving patient outcomes, this program has also enhanced the work environment and morale of our nursing staff."

Vice President of Medical Affairs