

case study

Change Management: Enhancing OB/GYN Care in a Florida Health System

Robert Hunter, MD

Associate Regional Medical Director
OB/GYN Hospitalist Services



THE CHALLENGE

The need for emergency physician support was vital to helping the labor and delivery unit at this South Florida hospital improve patient safety and quality of care for pregnant patients. They desired medical screening at the point of contact rather than the traditional model of nursing triage with remote physician input. They also sought to increase the level of care they provided to the community clinicians as well as provide inpatient clinical teaching and supervision for resident physicians. To achieve this, though, required thoughtful implementation, culture shift and trust-building with nursing staff, community-based obstetricians and hospital leadership.



Hospital Information

A large South Florida public health system with community and regional facilities

TeamHealth Services

- OB/GYN Hospitalists
- Emergency Medicine
- Hospital Medicine

BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP

To achieve these goals, the system turned to TeamHealth. In September 2019, the partnership began at an initial site, bringing another site on board in February 2020. Working closely with facility leadership, we were able to identify needed changes and create custom solutions that best suited the needs of the hospitals, staff and community. The team began gradually implementing clinical and operational changes with the following goals:

- Implement an OB-ED to improve patient safety and quality beyond “safety-net” care
- Support an OB/GYN residency program to train physicians while enhancing standards of care
- Integrate existing emergency medicine and hospitalist services with OB/GYN care

IMPLEMENTING AN OB-ED

The primary change was moving away from the traditional model of emergency obstetrical care to an OB-ED model. In an OB-ED model, qualifying patients – usually 20 weeks pregnant and above – bypass the regular emergency department and instead present directly to the OB-ED unit. There they are assessed and cared for at the point of contact by dedicated OB/GYN hospitalists. This initial exam enhances quality of care by eliminating fractured triage processes. Ultimately, this bolsters patient safety standards and improves patient outcomes.

STARTING A RESIDENCY PROGRAM

In July 2020, the facility started an obstetrical residency program, training four residents per year at both sites of care. This integration of an academic program into an existing community hospital required tireless work from

leadership, clinicians and staff. TeamHealth OB/GYN hospitalists are part of the core faculty for the program, and the TeamHealth facility medical director serves as the residency program director.

INTEGRATING CARE ACROSS SERVICE LINES

One of the system's key goals was to improve patient flow, reducing fractured care and potential patient safety misses. With emergency medicine and hospitalist care provided by TeamHealth already in place, the OB/GYN program was immediately integrated with these existing teams and aligned in key areas, such as metric tracking, best practices and communication style.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Managing large-scale changes in any facility is difficult. With these multiple expansions of services and added programs, in addition to the strains of the COVID-19 pandemic, the team needed alignment and open communication to accomplish their shared goals.

ALIGNING WITH COMMUNITY PHYSICIANS AND NURSING STAFF

The first step was to ensure open communication and trust with community-based obstetricians and the labor and delivery nursing staff to combat any anxiety around the transition and changes. For example, some community physicians were wary of other providers, including both the hospitalists and residents, participating in the care of their patients and potentially negatively impacting continuity of care and patient satisfaction. However, the TeamHealth OB/GYN hospitalists were able to overcome these concerns by providing timely and quality care, communicating effectively and providing close supervision of the resident physicians. Over time, the community physicians were able

to observe the benefits of our services and have embraced the hospitalist's and resident's involvement in the care of their patients even beyond the initial encounter in the OB-ED. Open and real-time touch-points fostered a culture of collaboration and built transparency among all involved.

COLLABORATION WITH HEALTH SYSTEM AND FACILITY LEADERSHIP

The success of this program rests firmly in the approach we took from the outset – a true partnership. From the initial transition to ongoing innovations, we worked alongside facility and system leadership to ensure we had a clear understanding of our shared goals and strategies to effectively implement these changes while providing uninterrupted patient care. For example, in close collaboration with the system, the team adjusted to a two-physician model with a 24/7 presence to allow the team to safely and gradually enact new protocols and programs. In addition, the team and system benefited from access to TeamHealth's vast national resources and evidence-based best practices.

CONCLUSION

The health system and TeamHealth have a long-standing relationship. This intuitive partnership allowed us to create a collaborative and team-oriented environment. These successes have bolstered quality patient care – helping us achieve our ultimate goal of providing our community excellent care.



The changes we've implemented have been successful because we are focused on building. In every respect, this has been a true partnership from day one.

Robert Hunter, MD
Associate Regional Medical Director,
Facility Medical Director, OB/GYN Hospitalist Services

RESULTS

- **Maintained and advanced quality through substantial clinical and operational changes**
- **Expanded services to include OB-ED implementation and increased volume, with an increase from 50 OB-ED patients in September 2019 to 322 OB-ED patients in May 2022.**
- **Transformed team culture among OB/GYN hospitalists, nursing staff, residents and community physicians**
- **Integrated OB/GYN, hospitalist and emergency medicine care to improve patient flow, safety and throughput**

TEAMHealth

teamhealth.com

business_development@teamhealth.com



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