A Novel Financial Incentive Program for Hospital-Based Residents to Improve Communication with Inpatients’ Primary Care Physicians

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Background

• Financial incentive programs to encourage performance improvement have not, to date, engaged physicians in training
• UCSF Medical Center and Office of Graduate Medical Education introduced a novel financial incentive program for all residents in 2007
• Residents can receive a $300 bonus for each of 4 specific quality goals achieved (3 general and 1 department-specific)
• The UCSF Internal Medicine Residency structured its 2009-2010 department-specific financial incentive around improving communication with primary care physicians

Objectives

• Improve communication between internal medicine residents and the PCPs of patients hospitalized at UCSF
• Teach residents skills in communication and systems-based practice
• Engage residents in quality improvement

Incentive Program Goal

Document communication with patient’s PCP in at least 80% of discharges from the medical service
• Baseline contact rate = 55%
• Program runs from September 2009 – June 2010

Multifaceted Quality Improvement Program

Data standardization and measurement
• Residents document PCP contact in EMR using a templated PCP Communication Note created specifically for this purpose
• Data collected weekly by chart review

Data feedback and public reporting
• Real-time feedback of aggregate and team-specific performance on resident room bulletin board
• Biweekly email update to attendings

Education
• Core care transitions curriculum for all interns
• Intern-led PDSA cycles: 1) standardize responsibility and timing of contact, 2) disseminate best practices for PCP contact

Results to date: Weekly Performance & PDSA Cycles

80% goal reached by 5th week of program, representing 25% improvement over baseline
PDSA cycles resulted in further improvement
PCP communication rates now sustained at > 90%

Implications

• A financial incentive for residents, combined with public performance reporting and education, has improved communication between UCSF residents and inpatients’ PCPs
• This unique pay-for-performance program provides a template for involving residents in quality improvement