**Durham VA Medical Center| Durham, North Carolina**

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**Background**

The Durham Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center is located in Durham, North Carolina. The Durham VAMC is part of Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) 6, the VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network which includes eight medical centers. The Durham VAMC serves more than 200,000 veterans living in a 26-county area throughout central and eastern North Carolina.

The medical center has 2,043 employees with 674 or 33 percent being veterans that provide quality safe patient care to their veteran community. Through March 2012 there were 506.4 Full-Time Equivalent Employees Registered Nurses and 89.2 Licensed Practical Nurses working at the Durham VAMC.

The budget for the Durham VAMC for Fiscal year FY2011 was $371 million. The budget for FY2012 is $400 million which is an increase of $29 million from FY11. The Durham VA medical center’s budgets in FY2011 and FY2012 were dedicated towards providing high levels of quality of care and patient satisfaction through their staffing, programs and initiatives in order to ensure all of the veterans needs and expectations are met.

**Quality of Care**

The Durham VA vision of quality is providing safe, effective, and efficient patient-centered care in a fiscally responsible way. The Durham VA medical center continues to strive to be the employer of choice that has strong academic and community affiliations that provides high quality of care to the veteran community.

The medical center as a healthcare facility measures and manages quality by the selection of performance monitors and measures which are aimed at determining if a process and/or function is performing at levels expected and designed by the medical center.

The medical center demonstrates and maintains accountability for quality of care through an established reporting structure and engaged communication. Each Service/Section Chief and Program Director is responsible for the planning, implementing, integrating, and evaluating all elements of the medical center’s quality management program. The management of quality by the Durham VA is overseen through a Medical Center Governance Structure. Through this structure there is a series of committees and sub-committees which report their findings and or recommendations to councils which are chaired or co-chaired by members of the executive leadership team. Each council is chartered with specific charges and measures of effectiveness. The medical center has an effective internal tracer program whereby a trained tracer team of consultants performs internal evaluations of clinical areas to ensure there is a safe environment and that veteran care is being provided in a safe and high quality manner.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (VAOIG) Office of Healthcare Inspections conducted a Combined Assessment Program (CAP) Review at the Durham VAMC on June 10, 2011. The CAP review focused on Environment of Care (EOC), Management of test results, Coordination of care, and management of multidrug resistant. There were six OIG-CAP findings and recommendations. The Durham VAMC had a Joint Commission accreditation inspection on August 15th -August 19th, 2011. The Durham VAMC was fully accredited in the following programs: Hospital, Behavioral Health, and the Community Living Center. The medical center has implemented all corrective actions and was approved by the Joint Commission.

The medical center provides quality of care training to all new employees through their New Employee Orientation program. The training includes patient safety and customer satisfaction training. Employees throughout the year receive additional performance and quality improvement training that are job specific. Each employee is also required annually to complete job specific competencies and on-line trainings through their Talent Management System.

In regards to providing quality and safe patient care; the medical center recently completed major construction to renovate all of the inpatient nursing units transforming them from their 1953 design to modern units with private and semi-private rooms. For FY2012, the medical center has several construction projects and internal office and clinic moves to improve the overall veterans’ quality of care experiences.

A main resource that the Durham VAMC needs from VA Central Office and the VISN is that the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) model to be modified to properly fund medical centers with rapid workload growth due to increase veteran enrollment.

The main challenge for the medical center is to fill open health care provider positions as a result of an influx of staff retirements. Another facility challenge is workload growth; the Durham VA has projected that there will be a 5 percent growth in unique veterans making the Durham VAMC the second fastest growing site within VISN 6.

*Quality Manager*

The Chief of Quality Management Service is responsible for managing and leading the medical center’s quality assurance program. The quality manager’s maintains responsibility for the medical center’s survey readiness to include that all Veteran Health Administration (VHA), Joint Commission, Office Inspector General (OIG), and other accreditation organization requirements are met. Further responsibilities include the overall medical center’s customer satisfaction, systems redesign, utilization management, risk management, and credentialing and privileging programs. The medical centers quality manager also oversees the external peer review program; which measures the clinical quality of care.

The challenges that the Durham VAMC quality manager has is that are too many measures to manage due to limited resources.

*Patient Safety Manager*

The Patient Safety Manager (PSM) is responsible for ensuring that the medical center has a pro-active approach in the overall improvement of the medical center’s patient safety program. The patient safety manager analyzes episodes of care that requires improvement to include near misses, with a focus of systems improvement. The medical center’s patient safety manager is also in charge of performing Root Cause Analysis (RCA) as a result of communication, systematic and/or process failures.

The Durham VA Medical Center’s patient safety manager’s main challenge is that there needs to be an increase in staffing in order to do more aggregate of information in order to increase the overall improvement in patient safety programs and initiatives.

*Utilization Manager*

The Utilization Managers duties and responsibilities for the Durham VAMC are to ensure that quality of care standards are met which includes the completion of reviews for patients admitted to the medical center as well as those remaining in the medical center in order to ensure that they are receiving the appropriate levels of care/treatment and are receiving timely access.

The main challenge for the utilization management staff is having the ability to provide same day access rather offering veterans the next available appointment.

*Risk Manager*

The Risk Manager is responsible for developing and managing the Durham VA Medical Center’s Risk Management program in accordance with all regulatory agencies, VHA, VA Network, and facility requirements. The Risk Manager at the Durham VAMC is part of the Quality Management team and participates regularly on Performance Improvement (PI) initiatives. The RM role is to look at processes or failures and involve the Systems Redesign and Utilization Program Managers to change current policy The RM is also involved with facilitating corrective actions to improve quality of care and patient satisfaction issues that have been discovered in a risk management review. The Risk Manager also follows-up on veteran concerns brought to them by the Veteran Representative involving: missing personal property; allegations of negligence/malpractice; allegations of abuse; medication errors; and issues related to safety.

*System Redesign Manager*

The Systems Redesign manager is responsible for eliminating waste to improve processes which overlaps into providing quality care and patient satisfaction. A challenge for the Systems redesign manager is that the scheduling system needs to be redesigned so the medical center can provide same day healthcare services.

*Chief Health Medical Information Officer*

The Chief of Health Information Management Service is responsible for timely oversight of the quality and accuracy of the medical record and all associated clinical documentation, coding, and release of information. The Chief Health Medical Information officer also assures that the electronic health record offers accurate efficient quality documentation.

*Women Veterans Program Manager*

The Women’s Veterans Program manager is responsible for promoting the health, welfare, and dignity of women veterans, and their families, by ensuring timely access and sensitivity through comprehensive gender specific care to over 4,200 enrolled women veterans. The programs and initiatives that the Durham VAMC women’s health program has to ensure quality of care and patient satisfaction for women veterans are the following: comprehensive multidisciplinary women’s health mental health team, baseline monitoring for cervical and breast cancer screenings, providing expanded women’s healthcare services to include female healthcare providers at all of the affiliated Community Based Outpatient Clinics, increased outreach programs through partnerships with the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation New Dawn (OND), and Rural Health program managers, expanded mammography services at the Durham site, to include full range of cancer care and screenings, and current expansion of the women health clinic in Durham.

The Challenges for the Women’s health care program is that there are no available resources for day care services and an increase in fee-based services for obstetric care.

**Patient Satisfaction**

Background

The Durham VAMC is committed to providing the best healthcare to their veterans. In order to accomplish a high level of patient satisfaction; the Durham VAMC customer service standards are based upon national VA standards for patient satisfaction. The Durham VAMC measures, tracks, and manages patient satisfaction through their internal customer satisfaction council. The scope of the medical center’s customer satisfaction council is to discuss issues related to customer service and to identify new ways of providing the highest levels of service and care. Durham VAMC provides evidence based and metric proven high quality of care. The Durham VA Medical center’s goal in regards to patient satisfaction is to mirror the quality of care that is received to the perception of care that the veteran actually receives. In order to accomplish high levels of patient satisfaction the Durham VAMC is committed to providing the veterans access, coordination of care, continuity of care, courtesy, education, emotional support, physical comfort, patient preferences, transition, pharmacy care and specialist care to their veteran population.

Currently, the medical system is using SHEP and Press Ganey survey scores to measure and track patient satisfaction within their veteran community. VISN 6 has contacted with Press Ganey to provide more timely, unit/provider data to enable the Durham VAMC to improve processes related to customer service and patient satisfaction. Strategic goals from these surveys are currently in place for the overall medical center’s progress and the reports are discussed at monthly patient satisfaction and quality of care meetings.

*Director of Patient Care Services*

The Director of Patient Care Services is responsible for the management and oversight of all of the nursing professionals and the overall delivery of inpatient nursing care and sterile processing services. A challenge for the Director of Patient Care Services is the current 11 percent turnover rate for the nursing staff. The turnover rate is due to retirements, terminations, educational pursuits, expansion and/or creation of new programs, internal transfers and/or promotions, and personal relocation decisions. The challenge for the Director of Patient Care Services is that currently it takes up to three months to fill a vacant nursing position depending on the individual circumstances.

*Patient Advocate*

The Patient Advocate is responsible for ensuring that all veterans and their families who receive their healthcare from a Veterans Healthcare Administration facility have their complaints addressed in a convenient and timely manner. The Durham Patient advocacy program operates under the broader scope of service recovery. The patient advocacy program is an important aspect of patient satisfaction that proactively promotes VHA initiatives in order to provide high quality service to their veteran population. The most frequent complaints that the Durham Patient advocates receives are: 1) access to care through communication (telephone, letters, etc.); 2) access to specialty care; and 3) beneficiary travel

*Patient Aligned Care Team Coordinator*

The PACT Coordinator at the Durham is responsible for the transition and/or transformation of primary care delivery to the PACT model of healthcare delivery. The PACT coordinators’ mission is to provide optimal health care management through collaborative teamwork in an effort towards patient-centered care. The PACT coordinator and their staff conduct veteran focus groups so veterans can be involved in the overall PACT decision making process. The challenges that the medical center face with their existing PACT model is having adequate staff to care for their 44,000 veterans that are currently enrolled in primary care. Currently, the provider staff assigned to the Primary Aligned Care Teams split their time between clinic time and their academic affiliation responsibilities.

**Veteran Town Hall**

A veteran town hall meeting was conducted at the American Legion Post #7 in Durham, North Carolina on April 23, 2012. There were 22 veterans in attendance to discuss issues and concerns with the healthcare they receive at the Durham VA. Some of the issues and or concerns that came out of the town hall meeting were as follows: parking, scheduling appointments and the automated telephone system is not very user friendly.

**Recommendations**

* Due to the amount of mandated measures that the medical center needs to review and track ; the medical center needs to establish a more effective and efficient mechanism to track all of the measures associated with healthcare facilities
* The medical center needs to hire more advocates to address, analyze and track patient care issues and concerns
* There needs to be increase funding to the medical center to compensate for the projected 5-6 percent increase in veteran enrollment
* The Durham VA needs to hire a permanent Director in order to provide leadership continuity to the staff and the veterans who use the medical center and their affiliated community based outpatient clinics