



Sentara Norfolk General Hospital
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March 14, 2016

Michael Lundberg, Executive Director
Virginia Health Information
102 N. 5th Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Mr. Lundberg:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2014 Cardiac Care Readmission Report for Sentara Norfolk General Hospital.

The 30-day related readmissions for Heart Failure patients were assessed as "Greater than Expected." Sentara Norfolk General Hospital and Sentara Heart Hospital consistently monitor heart failure and medical cardiology cases for evidence-based care. We pride ourselves on providing excellent care to all of our patients. At Sentara Heart Hospital/SNGH where Advanced Heart Failure care is provided, some of the most complex patients are treated including patients who are eventually receive heart transplantation and/or mechanical circulatory support devices. Readmissions of heart failure patients to our hospital reflect a combination of both planned readmissions and emergency readmissions.

SNGH conducted a detailed review of those patients as part of our ongoing Quality Improvement process. Of the 264 charts reviewed, 14 patients left against medical advice or were discharged with hospice/bridge to hospice services and their inclusion in the population was felt to be questionable. Twelve percent of the readmissions were for planned procedures, while another 9% were readmitted with arrhythmias. Six percent of patients readmitted had either continuous drips (Milrinone, Dobutamine, etc.) or left ventricular assist devices (LVADs) due to the severe nature of their disease. An additional 6% of patients were noted to have questionable coding at discharge, which may have impacted their inclusion in the patient population.

One concern identified during our detailed review is that 60% of heart failure/medical cardiology patients were discharged from SNGH without follow up services documented. Sentara Healthcare recognizes the challenges of reducing potentially avoidable early readmissions in patients with chronic diseases. As a result, Sentara has established a system-wide focus on reducing preventable readmissions for heart failure patients. This includes a focus on supportive services and follow up for all patients after discharge.

We appreciate VHI's transparency with healthcare data to support our ongoing priority of improving clinical care.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Chidester', written over a horizontal line.

Paul Chidester, VPMA SNGH

Cc: Deborah Roberson, Director, Clinical Effectiveness, Sentara Healthcare