

Skilled Nursing Facilities Reducing Hospital Readmissions With INTERACT

Florida Atlantic University



With more than 1.6 million Americans currently living in nursing homes, approximately 60% are sent to emergency rooms and 25% are admitted to a hospital each year. Approximately 1 in 5 of these people are discharged from a hospital to a skilled nursing facility (SNF), yet are readmitted within 30 days. Experts suggested that 28-40% of these admissions could be avoided with enhanced care in the SNF, yet there were no programs dedicated to the care of SNFs until 2010.

In 2010, Joseph G. Ouslander, MD, a professor of geriatric medicine at Florida Atlantic University (FAU), developed Interventions to Reduce Acute Care Transfers, or INTERACT. With funding from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, INTERACT is a program designed to reduce unnecessary hospital admissions for senior citizens by directly changing practices at the skilled nursing facility level. The program includes implementing quality improvement, communication, decision support and advance care planning tools within these facilities.

“In order for skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies and assisted living facilities to be able to manage older people better without sending them back to the hospital, they need education, guidance and tools they can use in everyday practice,” said Ouslander.

Healthcare consulting firm Pathway Health based in Lake Elmo, Minnesota entered into an exclusive license agreement with FAU through the Office of Technology Development in 2016 to provide INTERACT training, education, management and consulting services to healthcare providers worldwide.

Each year the program is updated in response to changes in long-term care, including impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. An INTERACT Certified Champion course was launched in 2018 through Pathway to allow providers to become certified online. The INTERACT Center of Excellence program also recognizes facilities that complete a rigorous

certification program implementing, using and mastering the program.

Transfers to the hospital can be emotionally and physically difficult for residents and may result in numerous complications of hospitalization, in addition to being costly. By avoiding these admissions, hospital complications are reduced, which are common in older people, and Medicare saves billions of dollars.

“Using INTERACT’s standardized protocols, many residents of nursing homes experiencing an acute event can be treated without complications or the stress of a hospital transfer saving Medicare upwards of \$10,000 or more,” noted Ouslander.

Royalties from licensing INTERACT have exceeded \$500,000 over the past seven years, which FAU reinvests back into academic research in healthcare and related fields to continue to develop and expand similar programs.

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