BACKGROUND

The current national opioid crisis is affecting not only pregnant patients, but also their newborns. Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN), a Magnet® designated hospital in Southeastern PA, noted a 42% increase from 2014 to 2016. The increase in this population created challenging interactions between both parents and the unit clinical staff as expectations for the care of these newborns was not understood or anticipated by families. Challenges were recognized by multiple stakeholders in the system, and a need to improve the care continuum for mothers and newborns was identified.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this quality improvement project was to conduct an educational needs assessment and develop standardized education and resources to support outpatient obstetrical clinical staff in caring for pregnant mothers and their newborns who have been exposed to opioids.

METHODS

- Interviewed key stakeholders to provide information on current state and opportunities to improve

  - Department leaders
  - OB/GYN & Obstetrical Providers
  - Women’s & Children’s service line inpatient and antenatal staff

- Surveyed outpatient OB/GYN staff following initial education

- Provided 2 education sessions to improve knowledge about substance abuse screening, NAS, and the care continuum for pregnant mothers and newborns at LVHN

- Developed next steps in our quality improvement journey

RESULTS

ORGANIZATIONAL:

- Screened 3,366 women using 4P’s Plus© tool since integration into pathway and EPIC EHR (December 15, 2016 to July 7, 2017)

- Observed breakdown of communication skills across service line departments and locations

- Developed relationships between inpatient and outpatient LVHN clinical staff

- Educated 180 clinical staff during two in-service sessions

- Noted a 50% decline in NAS admissions from 2016 to 2017

COMMUNITY/PATIENT BENEFICIARIES:

- GOAL: improve the care continuum for pregnant women and newborns exposed to opioids by conducting a needs assessment of clinical staff and developing standardized education and resources for staff providing care to mothers and newborns.

- Number of health care providers (HCPs) who have benefitted from project activities

  - OB/GYN physicians: 52
  - Family Medicine physicians: 150
  - Health Care administrators: 3,366
  - Inpatient registered nurses: 6
  - Ambulatory registered nurses: 48

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LESSONS LEARNED

- The importance of developing a sense of urgency around the national opioid crisis and the impact on the LVHN community

- Timing is everything: The ability to align project work with current culture and workflow redesign efforts was invaluable

- Engaging top leadership support at the beginning of the project lent credibility and resulted in necessary resource allocation for project implementation

- Additionally, an unanticipated result included improving the work life experience for staff by providing an opportunity to promote more empathetic patient care

- Sustainability means embracing change through continuous quality improvement

CONTACT:

Lehigh Valley Health Network
Center for Professional Excellence
610-402-1704

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