

Care Team Model Eliminates Patient Anxiety

Just as an athletic team huddles up before an important play on the field, OSF HealthCare's team approach is taking care of patients with daily huddles to make sure every aspect of the patient's needs are met.

This is especially important in rural, underserved areas where OSF HealthCare is expanding access using Physician Assistants (PAs) and Nurse Practitioners (NPs) to fill the void. This care team model is being used at a new medical building in Godfrey, near OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Health Center in Alton, Illinois. It's the first PromptCare in the Alton area for minor injuries and illness.

The medical complex also includes space for an OSF Medical Group, with six primary care physicians, 24 exam rooms, along with on-site lab and x-ray technology. The care team works closely together to anticipate the needs of primary care patients, communicates their findings with each other, and makes sure no aspect of the patient's care slips through the cracks.

The team includes a physician, one advanced practice provider, two medical office assistants, and a care team nurse who coordinates a lot of what happens within that group. The goal is to take a holistic approach to the patient's care so they no longer have to use an emergency department for routine issues or to manage a chronic health condition.

Brandon Frizzo, office manager for the Godfrey site, says the approach is good for both patients who really need emergency care, and for those who need to better manage their health through regular office visits.

"It helps to increase access for the folks that need it in the ER, and it helps [patients with non-emergency needs] stay a little bit better and it helps the patient take better care of themselves," said Frizzo.

In some cases, patients who are facing challenges accessing care need community resources such as transportation. In that case, the care team nurse can coordinate with a social worker to help address barriers to outpatient care.

According to Frizzo, it can take a village to make sure all needs are met. Sometimes an extended care team is consulted.

"So we're able to meet with our complex care managers, our social worker, our nurse care manager and she's able to come in if we have a patient who is having difficulty getting to their appointments or maybe they're a new diabetic and they just have some struggles with checking their blood sugar, our complex care manager nurse is able to help the patient with that so they can take better care of themselves."

Another positive aspect of the new approach is the patient will always see the same team of people. Frizzo describes the experience as something that offers the patient consistency. That can reduce anxiety, fears, and encourage regular care.

"You're going to see Ann who's going to be working as your nurse. You're going to see Whitney who is working as your medical office assistant. All those people know your name and recognize you. They're able to communicate with the pharmacy if they're having trouble with their medication. Maybe a patient needs a prior auth (authorization). We can get that done."

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