Stroke Distinction Helps Hamilton General Hospital Improve Stroke Care Best Practices

**BACKGROUND**

Hamilton Health Sciences – Hamilton General Hospital and Regional Rehabilitation Centre is the regional stroke centre providing tertiary level stroke care for the 2.2 million people in the Central South Ontario Stroke Network. As the regional stroke centre within the network, they are committed to leading, developing, implementing and integrating stroke services throughout the region. This includes health promotion, primary and secondary prevention, acute care, rehabilitation, and community reintegration.

**OPPORTUNITY**

Following a major organizational integration in 2011, the Hamilton General Hospital and Regional Rehabilitation Centre were looking for a way to continuously improve the delivery of best practice stroke care. “We wanted to measure our performance against national benchmarks and demonstrate our excellence in stroke care to the community,” says Rhonda McNicoll-Whiteman, Clinical Nurse Specialist, who has been part of the leadership team for the Stroke Distinction program since Hamilton General first enrolled.

- Hamilton General Hospital – Accredited with Stroke Distinction since 2013
- hamiltonhealthsciences.ca
- csnstroke.ca
GETTING STARTED

Once they joined the program, Hamilton General Hospital and Regional Rehabilitation Centre met their Accreditation Canada Client Engagement Lead – the person dedicated to guiding them through the Distinction program – and received access to their online portal containing the required standards and educational materials.

The team engaged front line staff from the outset by disseminating a self-assessment questionnaire that helped identify to what extent they were meeting the standards, revealing simple knowledge gaps and complex process gaps. They then began collecting and reporting on evidence-informed quality indicators, which included both core acute and rehab indicators as well as a selection of optional indicators. “That research helped to determine focus area and gave insight into what could be done to improve,” says Stefan Pagliuso, Program Director, Central South Ontario Stroke Network.

They also discovered an opportunity to bring everyone onto the same page – “In preparing for Stroke Distinction, we discovered that although staff were following best practices, they had trouble articulating which standards they were using. These best practices had become so ingrained in their day to day care, staff were implementing them without identifying them as best practices,” recounts McNicoll-Whiteman. “This insight, paired with the Stroke Distinction standards, gave us the opportunity to harmonize best practices, resulting in a common language that could be used across each unit that treats stroke patients.”

ON-SITE SURVEY

Performed by peer surveyors with experience providing stroke care, the survey gave the team an opportunity to receive and discuss feedback in real-time with other leaders in stroke care. “We found the survey to be less of an administrative exercise and more of an interactive discussion,” says Pagliuso. “We were particularly pleased with how it brought together internal and external stakeholders including paramedics, physicians, community partners and people from various other departments from around the hospital. It really helped us reflect on all of the improvements we made and the whole group left the survey with a strong sense of accomplishment, unity and pride.”

IMPROVEMENT AREAS

Dysphagia Screening

Stroke Distinction helped identify inconsistency in dysphagia (swallowing) screening throughout the hospital. “Through methods such as chart audits and in-the-moment feedback, we were able to pinpoint the units that needed improvement and incorporate appropriate dysphagia screening tailored to their existing processes, rather than disrupting established processes or slowing down patient flow,” says McNicoll-Whiteman.
Onset Days to Rehabilitation

The sooner a patient has the opportunity to participate in active rehabilitation, the greater the opportunity for stroke recovery. The implementation of the Integrated Stroke Model at Hamilton General Hospital and Regional Rehabilitation Centre removed the formal rehabilitation referral process and introduced the role of a Stroke Navigator, someone dedicated to facilitating flow across the stroke care continuum. This new model facilitated the improvement of the median number of days from stroke onset to admission to inpatient rehabilitation from 19 days to 6.

Door-to-Needle Time

Door-to-needle time is a Stroke Distinction quality indicator representing the percentage of acute stroke patients who need and receive a thrombolytic (clot dissolving) agent within 60 minutes of arrival. Through implementing a lean process methodology, seeking opportunities for improvement from front-line staff and eliminating waste, they were able to improve the proportion of patients treated within 60 minutes from 64% to 91%.

### HIGHLIGHTS

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of clients with initial dysphagia screening at admission</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time to administration of acute thrombolytic agent (within 60 min)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median number of days from stroke onset to admission to inpatient rehabilitation</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
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### WHAT’S NEXT

As the Hamilton General Hospital and Regional Rehabilitation Centre plan to continue its participation in Stroke Distinction, the broader Central South Ontario Stroke Network, composed of stroke centres, thrombolysis providers, stroke prevention clinics, acute stroke units, rehabilitation units and community re-integration networks, is looking at bringing more centres into the distinction program by leveraging Accreditation Canada’s Providing an Integrated System of Services to People with Stroke standard. “We’re excited to continue to serve the community by offering more seamless stroke care,” says Pagliuso. “We’re also really looking forward to upcoming updates to the program that will help accelerate us even farther along our QI journey.”

### LEARN MORE ABOUT STROKE DISTINCTION

Do you offer stroke services? Learn about how Stroke Distinction can help improve performance, promote a culture of quality and demonstrate your commitment to excellence. Speak with an advisor today:

+1-613-738-3800
info@accreditation.ca
accreditation.ca/stroke-distinction

“ Our path to achieving Distinction helped our teams reflect, improve, and provide care at a level that made us extremely proud of our service. Ultimately though, our patients deserved no less.”

- Rob MacIsaac, CEO, Hamilton Health Sciences

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