Background
- Heart failure patients need specialized acute care in the management of their chronic syndrome.
- Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center is a quaternary medical center which cares for approximately 1600 primary coded heart failure patients a year.
- Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center is part of American Heart Associations IMPLEMENT-HF™, a collaborative quality improvement program.
- This program improved adherence to evidence-based care of patients hospitalized with heart failure.
- This specialized care helps to focus interventions in an effort to improve hospital metrics (length of stay and best practices in the IMPLEMENT-HF™ program).

Objective
- To improve length of stay for heart failure patients at St. Luke’s Medical Center
- The secondary aim was to improve nursing knowledge related to care of heart failure patients.

Approach
- The advanced heart failure physicians and the heart failure Clinical Nurse Specialist evaluated the current state of practice in the care of heart failure patients at St. Luke’s Medical Center. They found patients were being placed on units throughout the hospital.
- When looking to the literature to direct the intervention of increasing efficiencies in the care of heart failure patients the following search terms were utilized:
  - Heart failure patient cohorting
  - Nursing care heart failure
  - Heart failure unit
  - Nursing education heart failure
  - Improving heart failure metrics

Synthesis of Evidence
- Literature supports acute care of HF patient in the following ways:
  - Cohort of patients have shown to improve HF patient outcomes, with the largest impact on length of stay
  - Nursing education focused on heart failure can improve care efficiencies, such as proper documentation of I&O and daily weight
  - Nurse’s knowledge related to care management of heart failure improves the quality of patient education which has been proven to decrease the rate of hospital readmission.

Implementation Plan
- PDSA method was utilized as the approach to implement a heart failure special unit. A proposal was presented to hospital administrators, led by the advanced heart failure physicians and the heart failure Clinical Nurse Specialist.
- Based on organizational priorities, leadership input, and evaluation of hospital unit culture, a medical/cardiac floor was designated as the primary heart failure unit.
- A learning needs assessment was given to the staff on the designated unit utilizing, with permission, the Nurse’s Knowledge of Heart Failure Principles (NKHFEP) questionnaire to direct nursing education.
- After the NKHFEP was given, tailored education from the findings was disseminated to all staff, both nurses and nursing assistants, to ensure best care practices were being followed.

Findings
- Heart Failure Length of Stay
  - Observed vs. Expected Length of Stay
  - Improvement in Nurse’s Knowledge of Heart Failure Principles Assessment

Figure 1. Decrease in observed/expected LOS from quarter 1 of 2022 versus Quarter 1 of 2023.

Figure 2. Areas demonstrating an improvement in nursing knowledge.

Figure 3. Change in heart failure education fall outs.

Outcomes / Conclusions
- Examining the quarter one data from 2023 the observed/expected length of stay decreased to 1.16 from 1.26.
- There were improvement in scores in the NKHFEP questions related to symptom presentation, utilization of fluid restrictions, dietary restrictions, and the use of NSAIDS and Aspirin for patients with heart failure.
- Examining heart failure education documentation, from January to May of 2022, there were 26 fall outs. Comparing the same time in 2023, there were 11 fall outs; a reduction of 48%.

Implications for Practice
- Implementation of a designated heart failure unit with targeted education for staff can improve patient outcomes.
- More opportunities exist to expand these educational efforts for staff which leads increased delivery of individualized patient care.
- Continued interventions include educational opportunities for staff.

References

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Figure 1. Providers, hospital administrators and staff members celebrate the opening of the dedicated heart failure unit on January 9th, 2023.
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