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*“Improving Healthcare For Californians”*



## Case Studies In *Excellence* 2013





# Outpatient Palliative Care Program Supports Family and Primary Care Roles

## Greater Newport Physicians Newport Beach, California



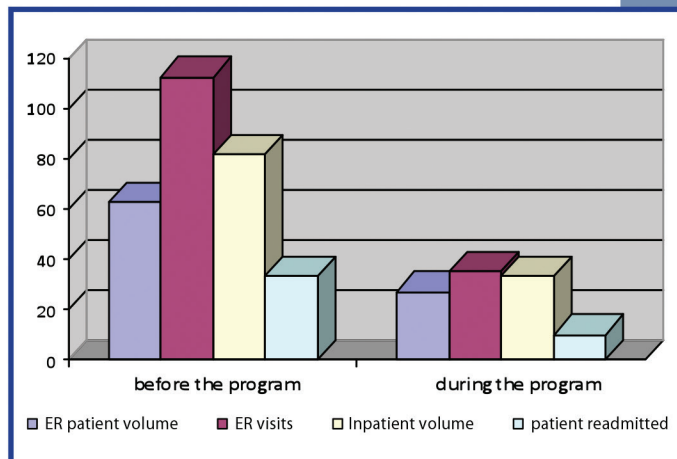
Palliative Care affirms the quality of life for patients and their families struggling with severe illness. Palliative care aims to prolong productive life, maximize comfort, and alleviate stress while maintaining an active treatment program individualized to patient preferences. Greater Newport Physicians (GNP) aimed to expand palliative care availability to the ambulatory environment by enriching local resources.

### The Challenge

- Inpatient palliative care programs may not have “seamless” integration with community based care.
- PCP’s do not always have the resources...or the time...to coordinate complex supportive services.
- Palliative care requires 7 day a week access to knowledgeable advice and service.
- Lack of palliative care often leads to dependency upon expensive sources of care...which, despite the cost, may be disruptive for patients and only briefly helpful.
- PCP’s may lose cherished family support roles by referring patients to palliative care specialists.
- Both physicians and families often confuse palliative care with “hopeless care” and wait too long before asking for help.

### The Process

- GNP Leadership decided to strengthen family and primary care roles
- Opened relationship with St. Michael Hospice
  - Expertise in managing complicated medical problems
  - Full spectrum of services including spiritual care
  - Adept in challenging conversations with patient and families
- St. Michael nurses perform initial medical, social, and emotional assessment in the patient’s home
  - Available for patient and family questions 24-7
  - Address what to do when patients do not feel well



- Triage new situations before 911 or ER, working with PCPs extensively
- Remember family members and caregivers
- Biweekly meetings of GNP Case Managers & Medical Director with St. Michael with updated patient lists and status reports
- GNP incorporated these patients into the high risk case managers’ (RN’s and Social workers) workload. (No additional staff)

	Before the Program	During the Program	Differences
<b>ER Volume</b>			
• # of patients who had ER visit	63	27	57% ↓
• Total # of visits	113	35	69% ↓
<b>Inpatient Volume</b>			
• # Patient Hospitalized	82	33	60% ↓
• ALOS	4.3	5	16% ↑
• # of Patients readmitted	33	10	70% ↓
• Cost per patient	\$31,238	\$21,816	30% ↓

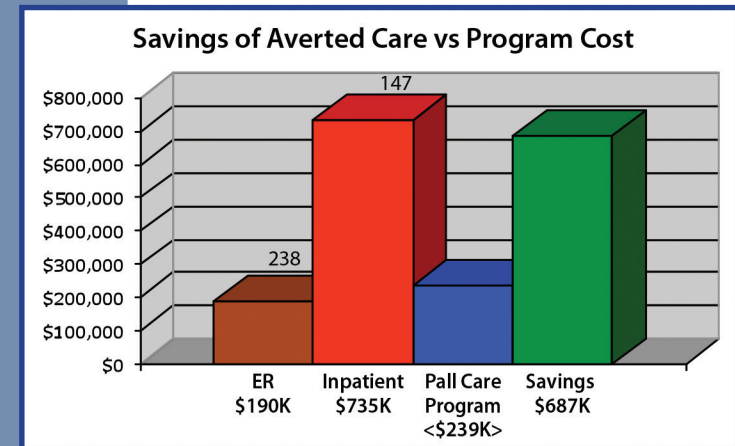
### The Outcomes

1. Between 2010 and 2012, 114 patients were enrolled. ALOS in the program was 82 days. 50% eventually transitioned to hospice. 32 are currently enrolled.
2. Utilization of ER and inpatient services for enrolled patients dropped to roughly half the previous year experience. Inpatient care, when necessary, had reduced cost per stay.
3. The program often found effective in-home alternatives to hospital solutions: Averted 238 ER visits and 147 inpatient admissions.
4. Sustainability: The estimated savings from averted ER and admissions exceeded overall program costs, without including subjective value of precious time, physical comfort, and emotional respite.
5. Patient & Family Acceptance. The following quote was not unusual:
 

*These last two weeks ...have made all the difference to both my mom and our family...I truly believe that you are responsible for keeping her out of the hospital. The nurse is also working through all the questions my mom has about life, her diagnosis, and family.*

### Next steps

With expanded volume, GNP has added an additional agency to help us: Hospice Care of California.



Greater Newport Physicians is an IPA of 700 physicians serving patients from Long Beach to San Clemente. GNP, a perennial Elite performer in CAPG Standards of excellence, has proudly affiliated with the MemorialCare Health System.

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