



CASE STUDY

HOW AUGUSTA HEALTH IMPROVED HCAHPS SCORES WITH A POST-DISCHARGE FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Augusta Health has consistently seen above-average patient satisfaction scores, but was looking for a way to earn top percentile ranks. In 2022, Augusta's team partnered with PREMEDEX (now SCP Health) to offer a comprehensive post-discharge follow-up program as part of a six-month pilot project in coordination with the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA). After a successful implementation, Augusta Health saw an overall increase of 3.83% in its Hospital Rating, with individual domains seeing increases as high as 6.98%. Patients who answered calls during the program rated Augusta Health on average 5.60% higher than those patients who did not answer a call.

BACKGROUND

Opening in 1994 in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, Augusta Health has a vision of being a national model for a community-based health system. Its core values of patient and community-centeredness, professionalism, excellence, and teamwork, reflect the work its employees do and what Augusta aspires to be. As of 2019, it had 255 beds and 2,375 employees, including 260 active medical staff and 34 volunteers. Augusta health provided care for 55,657 emergency room visits and 9,496 admissions.¹

Since opening, Augusta Health has consistently seen above-average patient satisfaction scores in many of its service lines but fell short of top percentile ranks. When approached by the VHHA with a potential pilot program, leadership saw an opportunity to improve by focusing on a well-known best practice – post-discharge follow-up calls.²

Prior to the pilot program, post-discharge follow-up calls at Augusta Health were done sporadically throughout the system, primarily in the obstetrics (OB) unit and Primary Care clinics with varying levels of success. Utilizing data gathered through a survey vendor, Augusta Health reviewed reports and dashboards daily across all service lines to identify trends. The team recognized that post-discharge phone calls provided an opportunity to gain an additional touch-point with its patients, ensuring they were well-equipped for care at home while also improving perception of the patients' overall experience.

1 Augusta Health. (2022). About us. <https://www.augustahealth.com/about-us/>

2 Elkins, K., & Branson, P. (2015, February 9). Abstract W P347: Correlation between follow-up phone call post discharge and patient satisfaction scores. *Stroke*. https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/str.46.suppl_1.wp347

LAUNCHING THE PROGRAM

Initial Conversations

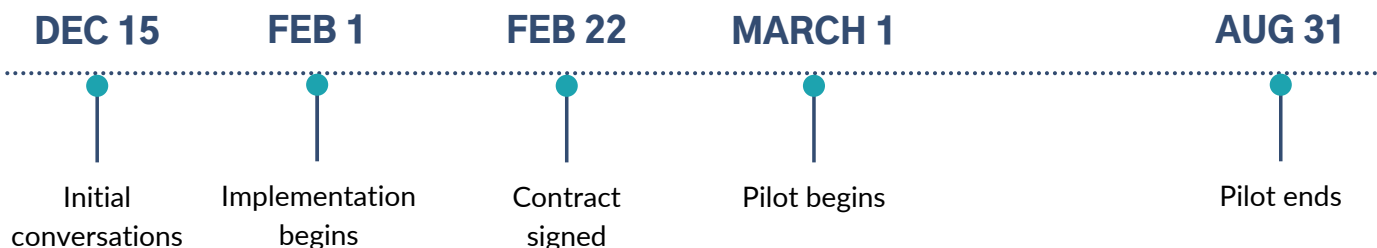
In direct support of its mission to improve the safety and quality of health care in Virginia by assisting members in achieving top-tier performance in quality, safety, and service, VHHA and its Center for Healthcare Excellence, in collaboration with VHHA Shared Services, connected Augusta Health with SCP Health/PREMEDEX to offer a comprehensive post-discharge follow-up program.

SCP Health/PREMEDEX's team of clinical and non-clinical professionals help hospitals of all sizes communicate with recently discharged patients. Their team engages with each patient within 24-48 hours of being discharged, allowing for reinforcement of important information including recommended therapies or filling prescriptions. Their program alerts hospital staff in real time of possible issues that need to be addressed to minimize the potential for readmissions.

After reviewing the business model, analytics, and testimonials, Augusta Health determined that the SCP Health/PREMEDEX solution was the best option available to help their team meet its goals and formally entered into the pilot program.

Partnership Timeline

The partnership officially started in February 2022. Having a Business Associate Agreement (BAA) in place prior to the execution of the full contract, Augusta Health's IT and Data Science departments were able to identify and work on implementation milestones during the month of February, including ensuring all needed information was readily available for PREMEDEX. This resulted in a 30-day implementation with an official go-live date of March 1, 2022.



Augusta Health's primary objectives for the pilot program:

1. Launch the program in a timely manner
2. Add a tracking question to its HCAHPS survey to help crosstab the influence of the pilot on overall patient satisfaction
3. Train superusers
4. Receive training for reporting purposes

RESULTS

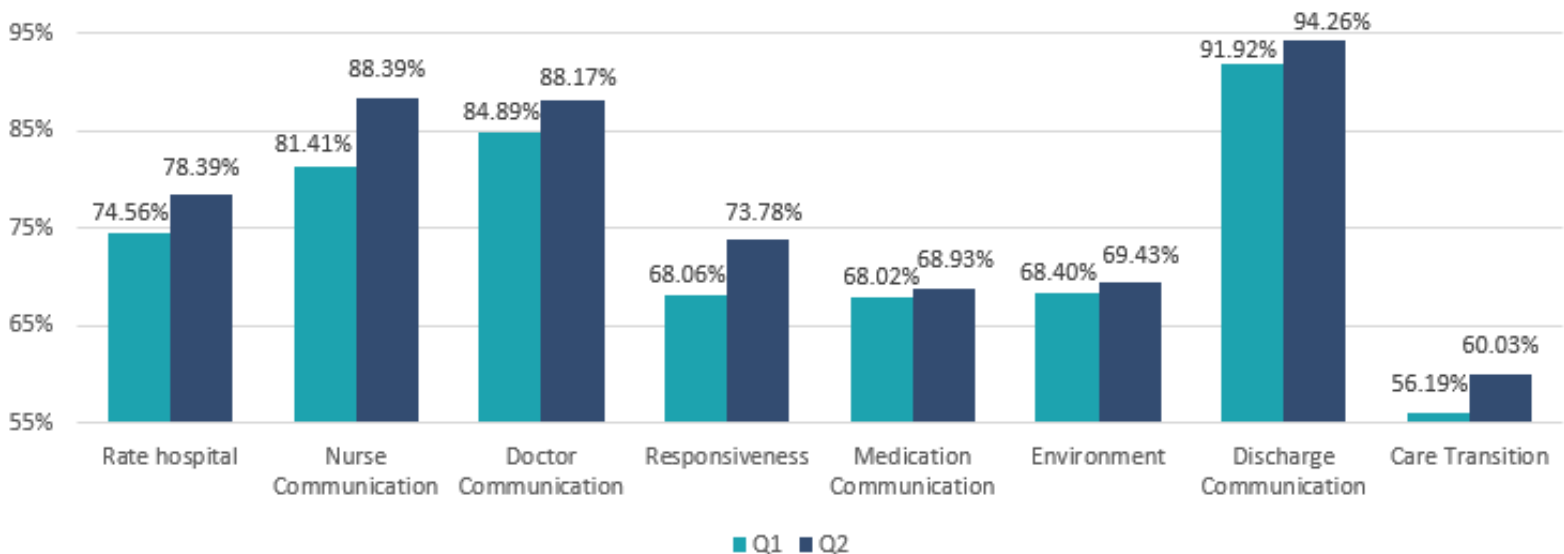
HCAHPS Benchmarks

Augusta Health compared its HCAHPS scores from Q1 of 2022, prior to the implementation of the PREMEDEX solution, to its scores from Q2 of 2022, and saw increases in all reported domains, with an overall increase of 3.83% in Hospital Rating. The area with the largest increase was Nurse Communication, which saw scores 6.98% higher after the pilot project. The difference in scores for each domain from Q2 compared to Q1 can be referenced in Table 1, while the changes in percent ranking for each quarter can be see in Chart 1.

Table 1:
HCAHPS Difference by Domain in Q1 vs Q2
2022

POST-IMPLEMENTATION HCAHPS	
Domain	Difference
Rate Hospital	+3.83%
Nurse Communication	+6.98%
Doctor Communication	+3.28%
Responsiveness	+5.72%
Medication Communication	+0.91%
Environment	+1.03%
Discharge Communication	+2.34%
Care Transition	+3.84%

Chart 1:
HCAHPS by Domain in Q1 vs Q2 2022



RESULTS

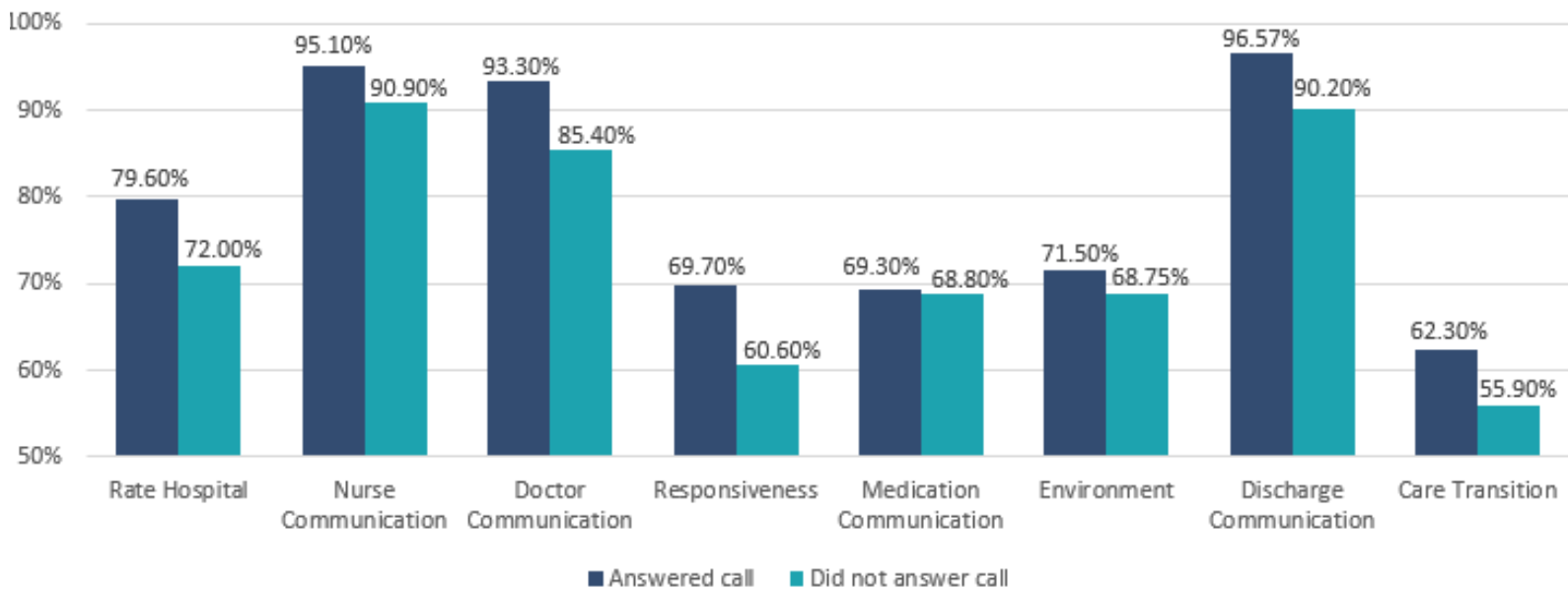
Comparing Individual Patient Scores

Table 2:
Scores Difference in Patients Who Answered a Call vs Patients Who Did Not Answer a Call

ANSWERED POST-DISCHARGE CALL	
Domain	Difference
Rate Hospital	+7.60%
Nurse Communication	+4.20%
Doctor Communication	+7.90%
Responsiveness	+9.10%
Medication Communication	+0.50%
Environment	+2.75%
Discharge Communication	+6.37%
Care Transition	+6.40%

Augusta Health also compared scores from patients who answered a post-discharge follow-up call to those who did not answer a call. Each domain saw increased scores from those patients who answered a call, averaging a 5.60% increase over those who did not answer a call. Doctor Communication was the domain that saw the greatest difference, seeing a 7.90% increase. Table 2 shows the percent increase by domain from those patients who answered a call. The difference in scores for each domain for patients who answered a call compared to patients who did not answer can be found in Table 2.

Chart 2:
Comparing Patient Scores - Answered vs. Did Not Answer a Call



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Augusta Health noted that the implementation and go-live process was efficient. Much of the SCP Health/PREMEDEX program is turn-key, with the SCP Health/PREMEDEX team providing resources and support for the hospital implementation of the program. Once live, call escalations sent to the hospital are the primary items requiring hospital leaders' attention.

The SCP Health/PREMEDEX system is a proprietary platform designed to engage, identify, track, and resolve service and clinical issues. It also makes analytics and data easy to find and analyze. Augusta Health recommends single-point ownership of the process and notes this was vital to its success. Its Patient Experience Department was responsible for evaluating analytics and escalations, which ensured information was relayed and escalations were addressed in a timely manner. Augusta also credits having one point of contact as helping SCP Health/PREMEDEX more effectively obtain the resources it needed during the project.

The process was smooth and the data we've received has been straight forward and readily available. While this is not a magic pill for downward-trending patient satisfaction scores, the patient communication can really help improve Overall Hospital Rating.

Matthew Fidler, DHA CPXP
Director of Patient Relations,
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VHHA & SHARED SERVICES' IMPACT

Value to VHHA Members

- Pursuit of pilot program to evaluate post-discharge programs
- Partner vetting
- Pricing & negotiations assistance
- Cost sharing for pilot program
- Partner relationship management
- Overall project guidance & effectiveness evaluation

The VHHA's Center for Healthcare Excellence's goal of assisting members in achieving top-tier performance in quality, safety, and service led to the collaboration with the VHHA Shared Services team for this pilot program. The decision to pursue a program of this nature provided an opportunity to support our members in the evaluation of evidence-based best practices for healthcare in Virginia. As part of this pilot program, member participants agreed to evaluate the effectiveness of the solution and share their experience and findings with the VHHA membership.

ABOUT VHHA SHARED SERVICES



VHHA Shared Services, an affiliate of the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association, is a member-focused organization designed to assist VHHA member hospitals and health systems achieve their individual missions. It does this by working with members to understand their current unmet needs, short and long-term goals, and then work with partners who offer services or solutions that support those goals. It aims to be a trusted and valuable resource for its members and hopes to support their plans for the future.

ABOUT SCP HEALTH/PREMEDEX



SCP Health/PREMEDEX helps hospitals and physicians engage with patients to drive better results. The solution helps hospitals serve more patients, improve outcomes, drive revenue, reduce costs, and increase satisfaction and loyalty. Its patient communications solutions are turn-key and custom to hospital needs and offers clinical and non-clinical representatives who work seamlessly with hospitals to establish appropriate protocols that will best serve patients. Its proprietary software platform helps track all interactions for updates on patient progress and to alert hospitals when a patient needs help. SCP Health/PREMEDEX connects with thousands of patients across the United State every day for hospitals ranging from one location to multi-location systems. SCP Health/PREMEDEX supports more than 400 hospitals throughout the country with communication, emergency medicine, and hospital medicine solutions.

HAVE QUESTIONS?



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