

# Expanding the stroke continuum of care: challenges to re-engaging the patient

## Introduction

Research has shown that there are existing gaps in the continuum of care for stroke patients and these gaps can lead to higher mortality, healthcare costs and hospital readmissions. (Cameron et al)

The Neuro Recovery Clinic was established to provide patients with stroke the opportunity to meet with members of the rehabilitation team after discharge in order to identify remaining gaps in care and connect them with beneficial resources.

Although Clinic attendees have reported high satisfaction with the service, the Clinic has faced challenges with patient attendance.

Using the plan/do/check/act model, multiple approaches have been taken to engage more patients in the Clinic.

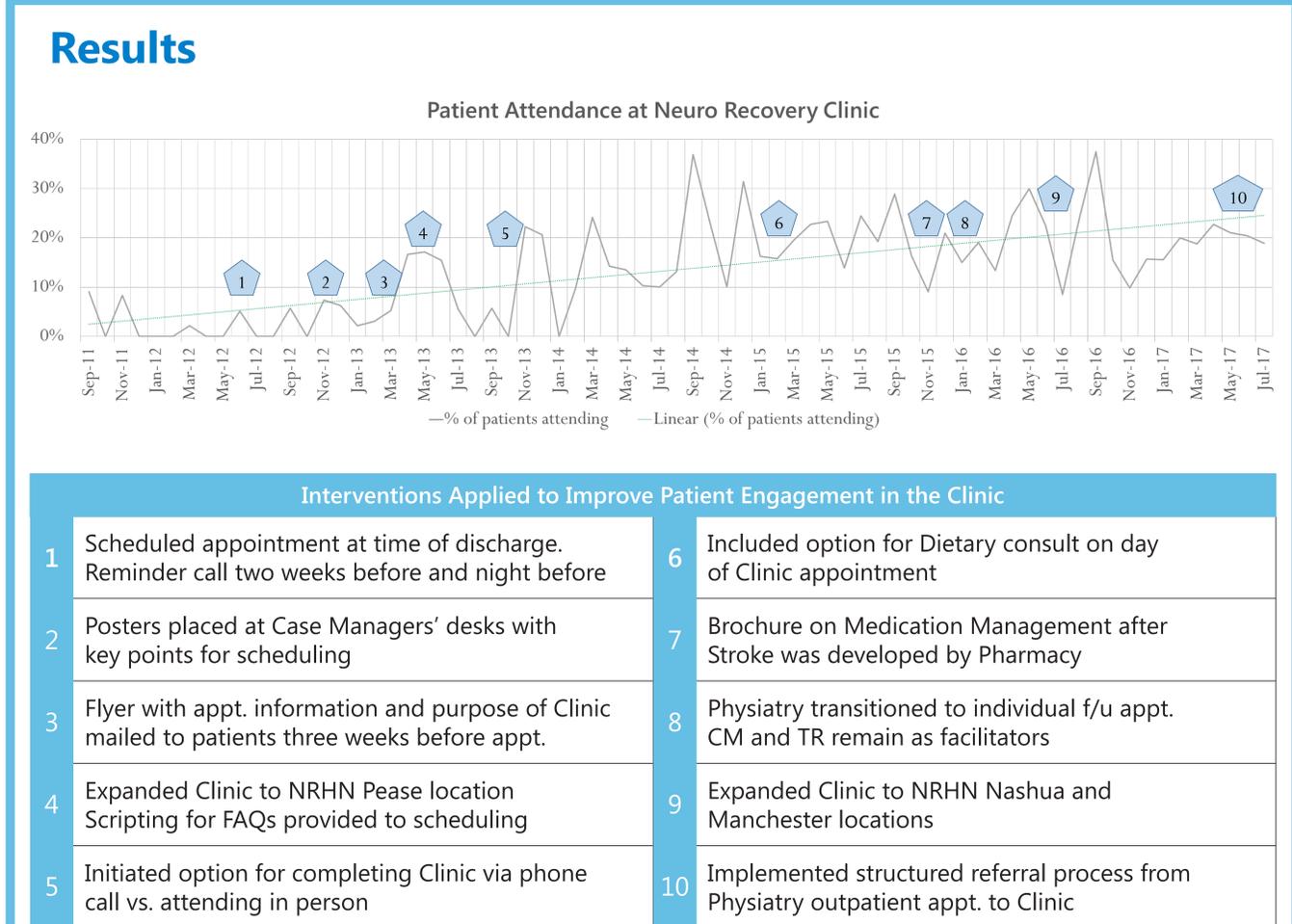
## Materials and Methods

An interdisciplinary group has worked continuously to identify barriers to patient participation and develop a multi-layered approach to engage patients.

Feedback from patients was used to guide the selection and implementation of interventions.

The feedback was obtained during the confirmation phone calls for the scheduled appointments, at the time of the Clinic appointment, and from comments on the post-appointment satisfaction survey.

Clinic attendance and patient satisfaction were monitored monthly to determine effectiveness of each intervention. A linear trend line was used to determine cumulative effectiveness of all interventions.



The cumulative effect of the various interventions applied has resulted in an overall increase in the percentage of patients participating in the Clinic. The monthly Clinic volume ranged from 0% to 38% for the time period represented.

Although there is no direct correlation between any one intervention and an increase in Clinic attendance, there is a positive upward trend that has resulted from the combination of all interventions. The interventions focused on the areas of appointment reminders, increasing access options for patients to participate in the Clinic, and modifying the services available during the Clinic appointment.

The line chart above shows the chronology of the implementation of interventions and the corresponding percentage of patients who participated in the Clinic in the subsequent months.

The Clinic experienced an overall satisfaction survey return rate of 26%, with the majority of patients expressing satisfaction with the Clinic and services provided. Survey respondents embellished their responses with personal comments about the benefits of the appointment.

The group continues to make adjustments in an effort to meet its goal of having 50% of patients discharged with a diagnosis of stroke attend the Clinic.

97 percent of survey responders would recommend Clinic

98 percent of survey responders found resources helpful

## Conclusions

The results of this ongoing improvement project have created a comprehensive approach to re-engaging patients into an extended continuum of care. It was found that stroke survivors benefit from frequent appointment reminders using a variety of methods of communication, as well as the option of where to receive the service.

Patients who expressed that they were doing well found value in sharing their successes and some pursued training as a peer visitor. The levels of patient satisfaction and their responses to the resources received as part of the Clinic communicate the value of the service being provided.

Future work could expand on the benefits of additional service delivery options. The use of telemedicine as part of the continuum of care presents unique opportunities. Consideration could be given to the inclusion of the Clinic as part of a multi-service appointment that consisted of a medical exam, therapy assessment, the Neuro Recovery Clinic and a peer support encounter.

Giving patients the chance to re-enter the continuum of care at various stages of recovery allows them to explore opportunities to enhance function, improve overall daily activity, and expand their access to the community.

## Literature Cited

Cameron JI, Tsoi C, Marsella A. Optimizing stroke systems of care by enhancing transitions across care environments. *Stroke*. 2008; 39(9):2637-43.

Winstein CJ et al. Guidelines for adult stroke rehabilitation and recovery: a guideline for healthcare professionals from the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. *Stroke*. 2016;47:e98-e169

## Further Information

Tricia Desrocher  
 tdesrocher@northeastrehab.com  
 Joanne Morello  
 jmorello@northeastrehab.com