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Achieving Quality Care in a Timely Manner: The Utilization of Observation Unit at Covenant Medical Center

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Achieving Quality Care in a Timely Manner: Utilization of Observation Unit

Observation Unit, Covenant Medical Center, Lubbock, Texas

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BACKGROUND

- Capacity constraints in emergency departments & high hospitalization rates have a ripple effect, leading to prolonged wait times, diversion of patients to other hospitals, and higher patient-care expenses. Inpatient admissions can be prevented through dedicated Clinical Observation Units. Increased efficiency can result in shorter length of stay, & decreased health care costs (Asudani and Tolia, The Hospitalist, 2013).
- The Observation Unit opened in 2015 with 13 beds with the aim to provide services to patients too sick to go home, but not meeting inpatient admission criteria.
- Most admitting physicians are Hospitalists, but other physicians can also admit patients meeting observation criteria. Both emergency medicine physicians and admitting physicians play an important role in the utilization the unit.
- The patient population includes a variety of medical conditions & complaints ranging from chest pain to dehydration.

PURPOSE

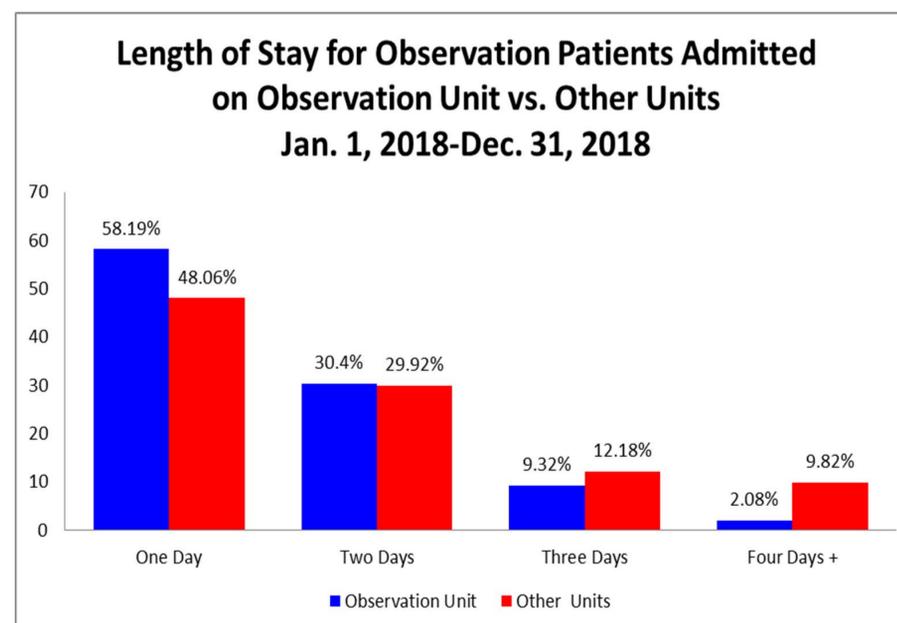
To assess the length of stay of Covenant Observation Unit patients in comparison to patients admitted in observation status to other units within Covenant Medical Center.

REFERENCES

- Pros and Cons of Clinical Observation Units/The Hospitalist;Asudano &Tolia, 2013
- www.reliasmedia.com/articles/137660-emergency-department-observation-units
- www.todayshospitalist.com/taking-charge-of-observation-units
- www.epmonthly.com/How-to-develp-a-succesful-observation-unit

METHODS

Data gathered and analyzed from MEDITECH for length of stay of patients admitted in 2018 under observation status. Results from Observation Unit versus Other Units were compared.



RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

- 2,886 patients were admitted in 2018 under observation status in 2018 at Covenant Medical Center
- 1,105 patients were admitted to the Observation Unit in the same timeframe
- Other units throughout Covenant Medical Center had 48.06% of observation patients discharged within 24 hours
- The Observation Unit had 58.19% observation patients discharged within 24 hours
- Other units had observation patient discharge rate of 9.82% for ≥ 4 days length of stay
- Observation Unit discharge rate for observation patients admitted for ≥ 4 days was 2.08%

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Collaboration between physicians, nurses, radiology and laboratory staffs makes the dedicated observation unit an essential part of patient management in acute care facilities & allows for:

- Proper screening of patients that are targeted to Observation Unit.
- Facilitation of urgent tests completion resulting in faster results.
- Encouragement of Hospitalists and other attending physicians to round on a single location versus scattered across acute care facilities, thus creating efficiency in treatment through discharge
- Coordination with Patient Placement Coordinators and Case Managers so patients that are changed to inpatient status will be transferred to the appropriate floors promptly.
- Awareness by other interdisciplinary team members about a patient's observation status so tests and procedures ordered are given the priority.
- Education of nurses and other interdisciplinary team members regarding the Standards of Care for Observation Unit and how it achieves decreasing the length of stay by leveraging benefits already mentioned.

CONCLUSIONS/DISCUSSION

- Covenant Observation Unit is designed for a distinct group of patients with distinct service needs.
- When properly utilized, Covenant Hospital and patients will benefit greatly in terms of reduced admissions, resource utilization, infection control, prompt and standardized care, length of stay and patient safety.
- With collaboration and teamwork, Covenant Observation unit can lead to a better and more efficient patient care.