

Breaking Barriers: Simplifying Access to Colonoscopy

Challenge

The McKenzie County Health System faced significant obstacles in scheduling patients for colonoscopies. The process involved multiple steps, including an initial office visit, pre-op, and education, often requiring patients to return numerous times. The complexity led to poor preparation among patients, necessitating rescheduling of procedures. The local population, primarily oil field and agriculture workers, found it difficult to miss work for these appointments. Additionally, many workers lacked family or resources for transportation and post-procedure care, creating further barriers.

What did McKenzie County have in its favor? Four providers, all surgeons, who rotate weekly and can perform colonoscopies any day of the week.

Action

Dr. Van Wylen, a thoracic surgeon with extensive experience removing barriers, spearheaded the initiative to simplify the colonoscopy process. The clinic sought approval through Med Staff, developed a streamlined protocol, and revised the education provided by nurses to implement a *See and Do* process. Collaboration with anesthesia ensured comfort with the new format. Eligibility criteria were established, focusing on low-risk patients without complicated co-morbidities, a BMI less than 45, and no history of complicated bowel issues, colon cancer, or anesthesia problems.

The prep process was updated to include MiraLAX and Dulcolax, full liquids for one day, clear liquids the next day, followed by the prep and the procedure on the third day. A brochure with detailed instructions was provided to patients. Instructions were delivered through patient preference – phone or email. On the day before the prep start, patients receive a phone call from a nurse to reinforce instructions, addressing occasional issues with document delivery via email.

42.45% Relative Improvement!

Colonoscopy rates improved, with more screenings completed and fewer no-shows. Patients praised the ease of the process, making them more likely to complete it. Despite some issues with same-day cancellations, the clinic saw a 42.45% relative improvement in colonoscopy rates.

Sustainability

The clinic plans to address issues with cancellations and transportation. A van has been purchased to transport patients, but concerns remain about post-procedure care for the next 24 hours. Data analysis will help determine the extent of these concerns and the necessary actions. The potential addition of a nurse navigator to make follow-up calls and ensure patient safety post-procedure is being considered.