Infection Rates Plummet at Altru Health System

ALTRU HEALTH SYSTEM | GRAND FORKS, ND
At the end of 2017, Altru Health System, a regional owned integrated system, found itself facing a standardized infection ratio (SIR) of 1.26 and saw a large opportunity to improve hospital acquired *C. diff* infection rates. Administration knew something had to be done.

As an independent health system in a rural area, Altru required the assistance of a partner with broad and deep resources to make a significant and immediate impact. Sodexo’s success with Altru’s Food and Nutrition Services, beginning in 2013, encouraged the system to explore a partnership with Environmental Services (EVS).

Sodexo made a bold move to secure the contract, guaranteeing the first-year EVS budget would remain stable with the previous year’s spend, plus promising a $477,000 reduction in labor expenses based on an expectation of improved service in all areas of operation. Clearly, Sodexo’s work was cut out for them.

This ambitious partnering began June 1, 2018 with Sodexo building the program from the ground up. The strong support of Altru’s leadership and their own infection prevention department laid the foundation for a successful enterprise. Speed to value began for Altru with the implementation of the full Protecta – Environmental Infection Prevention program. Specific components included intense and comprehensive safety and technical training on new chemicals and supplies and new cleaning procedures. Systems such as cleaning cart and closet set-ups and duty lists and schedules provided new efficiencies. Treating every discharged patient room with pulsed UV technology added an extra measure of safety.

After ending 2017 with a 1.26 SIR for hospital acquired *C. diff* and starting 2018 with a 1.4 SIR, Sodexo’s people, processes and technology – including the revolutionary Protecta program – reduced that number to 1.19 for the second half of 2018. Through four months of 2019, Sodexo is on pace to reduce hospital-acquired *C. diff* infections by 76% as compared to 2018. That puts Altru at a .48 SIR for *C. diff* infections and Sodexo expects even better results moving forward.
By analyzing duty lists to reduce redundancies and improve efficiency, labor expenses have been reduced by $763,733 (annualized after 11 months). This is a $286,733 improvement over the $477,000 reduction guaranteed in the contract.

In total, Sodexo is beating its guaranteed budget by $778,170. This number does not include the estimated $210,000 in savings resulting from the decrease in C. diff infections or $164,131 in additional services such as labor to treat every discharge with the pulsed UV technology or the cost of cleaning a new 32-bed facility for housing patients and out-of-town family members.

Even after reducing 12 FTEs over the past 12 months and picking up extra work in the process, the EVS engagement score went up 2.2% for the year and patient satisfaction percentile rank is up 12% over the last two quarters.

Altru’s success is a testament to not only Sodexo’s people, processes and technologies, but also the strong, dedicated Altru leadership, its infection prevention department and a motivated frontline team committed to accomplishing common goals.

**TODAY, ALTRU HEALTH SYSTEM IS SECOND BEST IN THE STATE FOR C. DIFF INFECTION RATES.**

**Linen Savings Adds to the Impact**

Linen distribution and expenses revealed another area for operational improvement. By communicating and working with a hospital linen task force, working extensively with nursing and reworking par levels and delivery locations, linen usage drastically declined.

Linen pounds per adjusted patient day fell from 12.64 to 9.57 by the first quarter of 2019. The average reduction in total pounds laundered has been 45,539 per month since Sodexo took over management of linen, resulting in an average savings of $25,502 per month in linen usage.