

Overview

AdventHealth Hendersonville’s “burning platform” to become an Age-Friendly Health System is to ensure older adult patients receive the best care possible and “what matters to them.” Based in Hendersonville, North Carolina, the health system works with teams across its network as well as with community partners, includes age-friendly initiatives as part of its annual strategic and financial planning, and incorporates age-friendly care into annual wellness visits for older adult patients. Overall, the health system’s providers are working with and supporting patients and their families to meet their care needs during every stage of life and health.

AdventHealth Hendersonville, formerly Park Ridge Health, is a 100-bed hospital with about 1,200 employees and more than 38 practices in more than 30 locations throughout five counties. It is part of an accountable care organization and aligned with Cornerstone Health Enablement Strategic Solutions, or CHES. The health system also is part of AdventHealth, a network of nearly 50 nonprofit, faith-based hospitals across the United States.

Approach

In 2018, AdventHealth Hendersonville leaders set a goal to improve the care of older adults across its network of practices and care services. Leadership partnered with a community geriatrician and formed a large task force of interested staff members and community partners to look for ways to incorporate best practices across the continuum of care. This task force meets monthly and includes several inpatient and outpatient departments: outpatient chronic care management team, home health, behavioral health, physical therapy, emergency department, volunteer services and radiology. The team reached out and included community partners that focus on the care of older adults, including the Council on



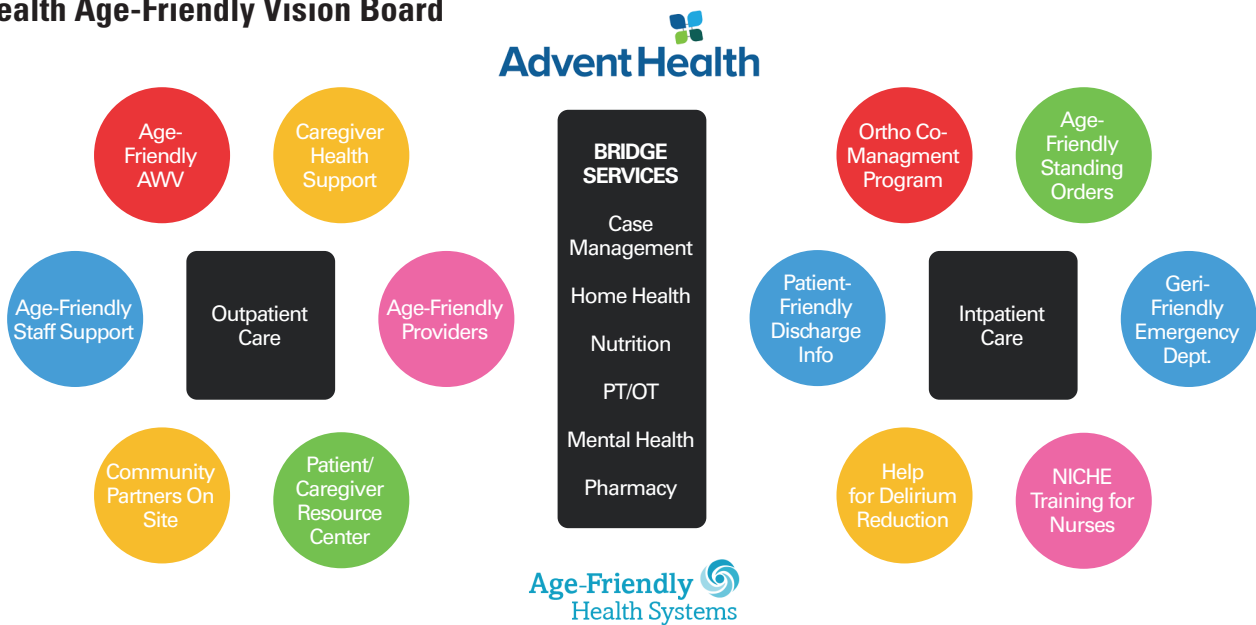
AdventHealth Hendersonville’s Age-Friendly Task Force

Aging for Hendersonville County; local, government-run health care providers; and community colleges.

Age-friendly initiatives are part of the health system’s strategic planning and annual financial goals. These initiatives also are discussed at all regular department meetings, which has helped spread awareness of the 4Ms Framework — what matters, medications, mentation and mobility. After thoughtful discussion of what an ideal health care system focused on the aging population would look like, the age-friendly task force created a vision board. In a short amount of time and with dedicated coordination, the majority of these dreams became reality:

- The ED is now certified as a geriatric emergency department at the bronze level by the American College of Emergency Physicians; it’s the only ED with such a designation in western North Carolina, and the first in the region.
- All outpatient certified medical assistants in primary and specialty clinics have participated in age-friendly training on the 4Ms and geriatric sensitivity training, which is reiterated at regularly scheduled knowledge fairs.
- Volunteers at key outpatient clinics assist patients entering and leaving the building — consistently

AdventHealth Age-Friendly Vision Board



being a pleasant face greeting older adult patients. This has been one of the project’s simplest and most effective changes.

- All primary care providers have received face-to-face training on the 4Ms and a notebook with key resources.
- Key inpatient nurse leaders are pursuing Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders, or NICHE, training and geriatric certification. This increases awareness of the 4Ms within the health system. The age-friendly team reviewed and expanded this work during 2021 and engaged student nurses in these efforts.

When creating the vision board, the age-friendly team focused on annual wellness visits, to give everyone in the AdventHealth Hendersonville system a clear baseline for each person age 65 and older. By incorporating the 4Ms in a meaningful way into these visits, all 4Ms are addressed with patients and families, and staff and providers learn about their importance in all aspects of care.

What Matters. During the annual wellness visit, a basic question about what matters to the patient is included to help care teams identify goals, such as being more mobile or taking fewer medications. In all primary care visits with patients age 65 or older, four social determinants of health questions are incorporated to identify and address food, housing, utilities

and medical issues. In addition, all patients across the larger AdventHealth network are screened for spiritual wellness at every visit with several questions: “Do you have a sense of peace?” “Do you have joy in your life?” “Do you have someone who loves you?” If the answer is “no” to any of those questions, patients are offered a follow-up call with a spiritual counselor.

Medications. Medications are reviewed at each visit with a focus on appropriateness of treatment in light of what matters to the patient, as well as side effects and possible medication interactions. Nonessential medications are discontinued. Pharmacy, home health and case management referrals are available if needed.

Mentation. With the updated annual wellness visit, all patients are screened with a simple mini-cognitive (Mini-Cog) assessment. If they score less than three out of five, a follow-up visit is scheduled with their provider or a memory care specialist to focus on mentation. The health system has purchased books for patients and their home caregivers called “HELP is Here: When Someone You Love has Dementia.” Providers give the books to families and loved ones, as needed, when a patient is diagnosed with dementia.

Mobility. During check-in, all patients are asked, “When was the last time you fell?” and they complete a self-assessment. If a patient screens positive for fall

risk, the clinician can choose to refer them to physical therapy for gait assessment; make a home health fall risk referral; and/or refer them to the health system’s outpatient chronic care management program. All patients leave with information on how to assess their homes to create a safe place for mobility.

Impact

Since the age-friendly task force incorporated the 4Ms into annual wellness visits, AdventHealth Hendersonville has seen a large increase in referrals to physical therapy and additional visits for memory assessments.

Annual wellness visits. Although the number of annual wellness visits has slightly dipped in the last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the health system anticipates reaching 2019 numbers by the end of 2021. Care teams are using telehealth to streamline the age-friendly annual wellness visits and better meet the needs of older adults. Completion of breast and colon cancer screenings has increased more than 20% over a two-year period.

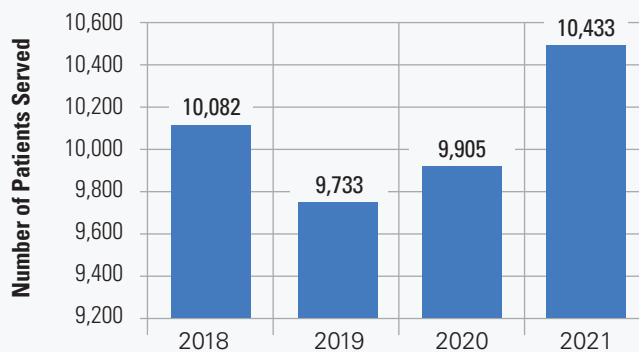
At annual wellness visits and other patient appointments, care teams have asked patients about 15,000 questions (in aggregate) related to social determinants of health. These questions have been added to the system’s touchless registration program that patients complete. In addition, patients are asked four questions:

- In the last 12 months, have you eaten less than you think you should have due to not having enough money for food?
- In the last 12 months, has the electric company threatened to shut off your heat/utilities?
- Are you worried that in the next two months you may not have stable housing?
- Have you, in the last 12 months, gone without health care due to unaffordability?

From these questions, Advent Health Hendersonville has determined that food insecurity is one of the largest concerns in the community.

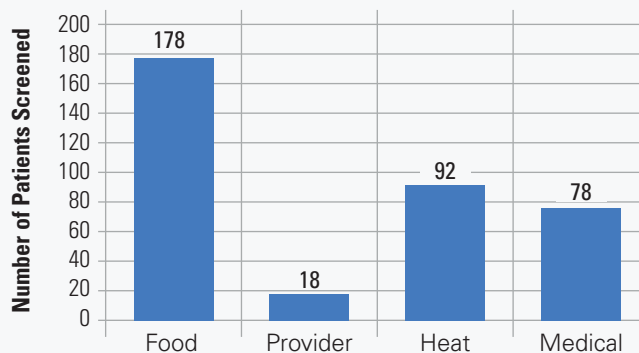
Physical therapy and memory referrals. In addition, the fall risk assessment and memory cognition assessments that patients complete show a greater need for physical therapy and memory referrals. By adding two geriatric psychiatrists — one inpatient and one outpa-

Age-Friendly Annual Wellness Visits (Medicare Patients)

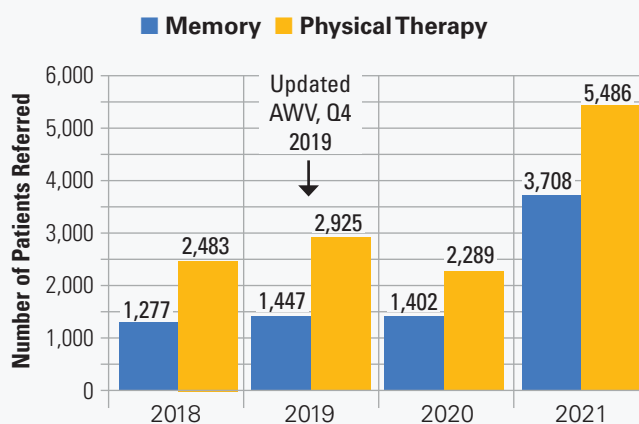


Social Determinants of Health Screenings

Answered “Yes” to Screening Questions



Memory and Physical Therapy Referrals



Source: AdventHealth Hendersonville

tient — and a geriatric-trained, licensed social worker to the age-friendly team, the health system anticipates quicker responses as it identifies more patients who have a geriatric syndrome.

Next Steps

In 2021, the AdventHealth Hendersonville team focused on mentation in the outpatient setting. Three geriatric-certified providers have been added in primary care, and the team will continue to educate providers on how to manage dementia.

The health system's physical therapy group has incorporated specialized gait-training equipment in therapy sessions and started a virtual physical exercise program for older adult patients who would benefit from it.

Additionally, the health system will add age-friendly topics to the monthly agenda of its physician-led quality committee, so the team can continue to review successes and failures. Future work includes creating an age-friendly informational video that all new employees watch to learn about this important change in organizational culture.

Lessons Learned

Two issues in particular proved challenging. Implementing age-friendly changes to the workflow of standardized annual wellness visits was a challenge. The perception that the changes would be too difficult to accomplish in the time allotted was tough to manage. In addition, educating many team members simultaneously is an imperfect process. Part of the education process involved promoting the participation of primary care providers in diagnosis and initial treatment of patients with cognitive impairment.

As a result of reviewing these two issues, the population health team adjusted its 2021 agenda to include connecting with certified medical assistants to hear their suggestions for incorporating the 4Ms into practice and improving care for older adult patients.

Key to the success of improving age-friendly care at AdventHealth Hendersonville was the senior leadership team, which has a vision for focusing on care for older adults. Additionally, the community organizations involved were excited and ready to partner in such an important venture.

Part of this process included getting valuable advice and

leadership from a well-versed group of physicians and advanced practice providers on the health system's quality committee. The group piloted the age-friendly changes and recommended modifications over a six-month period prior to rollout to other primary care offices.

Key Recommendations

- Seek leadership buy-in. At AdventHealth Hendersonville, leadership buy-in created the ability to get ideas off the scratch pad and bring them to fruition.
- Designate physician champions. They are key to success.
- Appoint an operations director who "owns" the initiative, to keep teams grounded and moving.
- Ask someone on the electronic health records team to attend educational meetings, create templates for each team and teach staff how to use the templates.
- Bring community organizations into the process early and identify specific individuals to connect with for future questions.

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