

Expanding Roles of Existing Staff through Standing Orders

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Why Standing Orders? NEVHC created the role of Care Coordinator in 2003 after a bumpy road in the first 15 months of our participation in the Diabetes Collaborative that ended up with the resignation of one of our most dedicated RN's at our pilot site in Valencia and a drawer full of data awaiting to be entered into the registry at our spread Canoga Park site. Needless to say, our summary reports showed the signs of abandonment.

The Care Coordinators proved to be a superb addition to the Care team by being readily available to the patient, acting as the liaison between the patient and provider, helping the patient maneuver through the referral system, and spending valuable time with the patient providing education, support, working with the patient on self management, and guiding the patient to available resources. Our Care Coordinators were successful in reaching our most difficult patients who, for one reason or another, do not follow the rigorous plan of care diabetic patients must follow. As the Care Coordinators succeeded in bringing patients back into the care system, requests for orders accumulated on providers' desks. The requests for provider approval included tests - necessary and predictable - covering the scope of laboratory testing, and appointments and referrals required for the appropriate diabetic care including yearly retinal diabetic screens, regular provider visits, referrals to the nutritionist, health education classes, etc.

NEVHC designed the Standing Orders to empower Care Coordinators and Clinical Staff to follow the plan of care designed by the provider and the care team in an uninterrupted fashion. Standing Orders allow the care team to enter pre-determined laboratory orders, refer patients for annual retinal screens, provide immunizations such as Td, pneumovax, and influenza without the burden of waiting for a provider to sign an order, thereby minimizing the risk of losing patient contact and further delay in care. Standing Orders also fostered the clinical care team's proactive management in the care of diabetic patients. In addition, the orders bring a comprehensive, standardized approach in the handling of diabetic patients: reduces risk of incomplete routine follow up testing; allowing the provider to focus on evaluation, decision making, designing an individual care plan and dealing with emergent issues

Our providers value the support provided by the care team and recognize that the progress made by the Diabetes Collaborative in our organization is largely due to the efforts of the Care Coordinators and the Clinical care team. Most importantly, our diabetic patients trust that the care they receive is comprehensive and that they can count on their provider and the support of the clinical care team. Standing orders fulfill the idea of continuum of care one step beyond that of conventional practice in advancing the plan of care than that achieved only through regular provider visits. They allow progress in the care of the patient on a daily basis. Our diabetes registry statistics have captured the benefits brought by Standing Orders and a more empowered patient care team