OPTIMISTIC Perspectives

A ‘Steady Sailing Ship’

As we enter the last 14 months of OPTIMISTIC’s CMS funding, we are proud of and excited by all of the accomplishments we have achieved thus far. We are thankful to all of our partners and staff members who have invested so much time and effort into making OPTIMISTIC’s mission and interventions a reality. With this in mind however, we are also continually striving to refine our project to ensure it is as effective and impactful as possible. In these next 14 months we will be focusing on strengthening our current Implementation and building on high-value aspects of our project, including:

- Expanding Collaborative Care Reviews (CCRs), with a focus on polypharmacy (described later in this issue),
- Refining our approach to dementia care training, and
- Continuing to promote advance care planning, use of INTERACT tools, and transition visits

Our goal for the rest of project is to be a ‘steady sailing ship’ and get to the heart of what makes OPTIMISTIC valuable. We, our partners and stakeholders, and certainly CMS are increasingly asking – is OPTIMISTIC working? The final evaluation of the entire Enhanced Care and Coordination Provider (ECCP) 7 site demonstration project, conducted by RTI, will likely not be available for several months after the conclusion of the project. During this last phase, supported by Hartford Foundation funding, we will be evaluating our model. This will involve analyzing data already collected for CMS reporting purposes, as well as conducting some interviews with our own staff and partners to learn more about the process and outcomes of OPTIMISTIC. This evaluation work will serve a dual purpose: We will continue to fine tune our current approach based on our findings, as well as inform the development of a next iteration of OPTIMISTIC. Our clinical staff and project team remain focused on the primary goals of this project – improving care for long stay nursing home residents and reducing avoidable hospitalizations. Let’s make the most out of our last 14 months and finish strong!

The OPTIMISTIC Project is a long term care quality initiative of the Indiana University Center for Aging Research, Regenstrief Institute and Division of General Internal Medicine and Geriatrics and the University of Indianapolis Center for Aging & Community. Funding is provided through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. 2015.
Sometimes Less is More: Addressing Polypharmacy in Frail OPTIMISTIC Residents

By Dr. Arif Nazir, Medical Director

The OPTIMISTIC intervention combines many unique elements to promote safe and effective chronic care management among the residents we serve. One of these elements, the Collaborative Care Review (CCR), provides a detailed examination of current care plans for OPTIMISTIC residents, allowing for appropriate changes to ensure that care is as resident-centered and evidence-based as possible.

One of the focus areas for these CCRs is the safe prescribing of medications. OPTIMISTIC clinical teams will now be intensifying their focus on medication safety specifically among residents who take multiple medications. Use of multiple medications, also known as polypharmacy, is often needed to manage multiple chronic illnesses among nursing home residents. For some residents polypharmacy may be appropriate, but for some it may result in unintended risks and side effects.

Using evidence-based protocols and procedures, the OPTIMISTIC staff will perform detailed reviews of residents’ medications to highlight those that could be discontinued or safely tapered to lower doses. With the help and expertise of geriatric pharmacist Dr. Samuel Gurevitz, the OPTIMISTIC team has been diligently preparing for this unique approach by:

1. Educating the OPTIMISTIC clinical staff on the principles of polypharmacy and medication discontinuation (also called deprescribing).
2. Designing tools and protocols that will:
   a. Facilitate safe de-prescribing
   b. Engage residents, families, facility staff and primary care in any recommendations regarding medications, and
3. Piloting deprescribing protocol in two facilities.

Starting in July, it is our goal that OPTIMISTIC will formally initiate this “Polypharmacy CCR” in one of our partnering facilities. The OPTIMISTIC leadership will contact the facility in advance to ensure they fully understand the related processes and procedures so they can be engaged partners in this exciting and impactful project.

Like always, I look forward to your feedback regarding this important project and will be happy to answer any questions. You can contact me at anazir@iu.edu.
Site Visits

Since the beginning of the project, OPTIMISTIC has hosted several guests who visit to conduct analyses or gain greater insight into our project. In recent months, OPTIMISTIC’s visitors have included representatives from the John A. Hartford Foundation, CMS, and Deloitte (the CMS-funded operations and support contractor). In May, project officers and a grant committee member from the Hartford Foundation met with OPTIMISTIC staff and partnering nursing facilities to kickoff the ‘next steps’ planning grant funded by the Foundation. CMS and Deloitte visited two partnering nursing facilities in June to conduct chart reviews as part of their oversight role. The OPTIMISTIC team received positive feedback from this visit, especially around REDCap, our data capture system, and our advance care planning efforts. In August, RTI, the CMS-funded evaluator of the entire initiative, will also visit several facilities as part of their annual evaluation. We would like to thank all of the nursing facilities who have hosted all of our guests over the course of the project – we appreciate your time and consideration in making our guests’ visits a positive experience!

OPTIMISTIC Featured in New Textbook on Geriatric Care

Geriatrics Models of Care: Bringing 'Best Practice' to an Aging America, a recently released textbook edited by Michael Malone, MD; Elizabeth A. Capezuti, PhD, RN, FAAN; and Robert M. Palmer, M.D., M.P.H, describes geriatric practice models used to guide the care of older adults. We are excited to relay that OPTIMISTIC is featured in one of the book’s chapters as a model for improving nursing home care and reducing avoidable hospitalizations!

Recent Activities

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Welcome New Staff Members!

Brittany Bernard, Research Coordinator

Brittany Bernard has been with the IU Center for Aging Research for three years and started working for Dr. Unroe in December of 2014. She received her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with majors in Marketing and Psychology from the University of Dayton and is currently working on her Master of Public Health at Fairbank’s School of Public Health. In her new role as Research Coordinator, she will help support activities of the Hartford planning grant. She looks forward to being more involved with the OPTIMISTIC project and team members. In her free time, she enjoys biking the Monon, trying new restaurants, and traveling.

Katie Rukes, Research Assistant

Katie Rukes is the new Research Assistant for OPTIMISTIC to assist with project coordination and data accuracy. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from IUPUI and will soon be applying to MPH programs to further her education. Katie previously worked as a care manager to help older adults obtain in-home services to prevent and/or delay nursing facility placement. Katie has enjoyed learning about and assisting with the different components of OPTIMISTIC, and is excited to be part of a project that is actively improving care for older adults.

Kathleen Rathke, Nurse Practitioner

Kathleen Rathke graduated in May from the Adult/Gerontological Nurse Practitioner (AGNP) program at the University of Indianapolis. Kathleen started her nursing career as a research nurse at Eli Lilly and then moved into business/HR leadership roles in the biopharmaceutical and other technology industries. A passion for health, wellness, and issues affecting older adults prompted Kathleen to change careers and return to her nursing roots. Kathleen was inspired by working with excellent IU Geriatrics NP preceptors and OPTIMISTIC team members during her student NP days. Kathleen will be focusing on the Polypharmacy initiative and will also partner with Karin Comastri at University Heights.
Welcome New Staff Members!  
(cont’d)

Sarah Bennett, Summer Intern

Sarah Bennett is a summer student intern working for the data team of OPTIMISTIC. She is going into her senior year at Dartmouth College with plans to attend medical school at Geisel School of Medicine. At Dartmouth, she has pursued a Biology major with a Social Inequalities minor while also competing for Dartmouth on the cross country, indoor and outdoor track teams. Sarah has been a research assistant on a Dartmouth study of family cohesion, an organic chemistry lab teaching assistant, and will be a teaching assistant for Human Biology in the fall. She is looking forward to this summer as a learning experience about medical research and data analysis. She is inspired to pursue medicine as a career as it is a unique way to serve patients. She is excited to help on a project that seeks to improve the health care for vulnerable individuals such as those in nursing homes.

NP Staff Spotlight: Sam Mwangi, NP

Sam joined OPTIMISTIC in March 2014. He quickly became a valued member of our team by consistently demonstrating outstanding patient care. Sam has been a top performer in completing hospital transition visits promptly and thoroughly. His response to the immediate needs of his patients and his attention to detail promotes the best possible outcomes for those he cares for. Sam is a conscientious and knowledgeable nurse practitioner who is loved by patients and families, and well-respected by his colleagues.

OPTIMISTIC Spotlight

National Partnership to Improve Dementia Care in Nursing Homes & Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) Call
June 16, 2015

Monica Tegeler, MD, presented on OPTIMISTIC’s Evidence-Based Dementia Care Training to over 700 attendees!
Featured Facility: American Village

American Village has been intensifying engagement efforts in the OPTIMISTIC project, and we are pleased to acknowledge their support! “The team at American Village are enthusiastic adopters of new programs and projects that enhance the quality of care of the residents, and OPTIMISTIC is no exception,” says Dr. Monica Tegeler, AMV Medical Director and OPTIMISTIC Transitions Core Lead. The administration at AMV make themselves readily available for OPTIMISTIC leadership site visits in order to collaborate on how we can improve processes to promote the best possible outcomes for residents. Under the guidance of the OPTIMISTIC project RN Barbara Hughes, American Village has implemented and seen the benefits of INTERACT tool utilization. The facility is very active in fall prevention quality improvement. American Village has been extremely successful with advance care planning and the Indiana Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment (POST) implementation. “OPTIMISTIC supports American Village in providing the highest quality results for our residents and families,” says AMV Administrator Tim Carter. Thank you American Village for all of your support!

ECCP Spotlight: Alabama

OPTIMISTIC is one of seven programs in the nation supported by the CMS Innovation Center as part of the “Initiative to Reduce Avoidable Hospitalizations Among Nursing Facility Residents”. As part of our ongoing newsletters, we will spotlight the unique features and goals of each of the other six programs, known as ECCPs.

In Alabama, the Alabama Quality Assurance Foundation (AQAF) is implementing their intervention to reduce avoidable hospitalizations in 23 nursing facilities spread over 14 counties in central and north central regions of the state. Registered nurses are placed in each facility to implement both a risk assessment program for residents and a training program for nursing facility staff. The resident risk assessment program employs the use of INTERACT and other tools to improve the monitoring and management of medical conditions. The training program for facility staff, known as “EMPOWER” (Enhancing My Profession and Organization with Empathy and Respect), is designed to reduce facility turnover by equipping staff with tools to manage workplace demands and professional relationships. AQAF’s interventions strive to better manage residents’ conditions and improve communication between staff and residents so avoidable hospitalizations can be minimized.