

# Reducing Clinical Care Variation by Implementing Clinical Practice Guidelines/Clinical Pathways

## Team Members

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## Background

Clinical variations is one of the biggest challenges faced by the healthcare organizations world-wide. Variations in health care delivery are responsible for suboptimal outcomes, increased lengths of stay (LOS), and hospital readmission rates.

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) suggests many quality and cost problems in a process or product are due to variations. Clinical variations for the top Diagnosis Related Group (DRG) admissions can be reduced by standardizing healthcare using clinical pathways which are evidence-based practice. Standardized care not only reduces clinical variations but also improves clinical outcomes which enhances patient safety and efficiency of healthcare delivery.

Healthcare accreditation agencies (e.g., CBAHI, JCI) require hospitals to develop an organization-wide written policy on clinical practice guidelines (CPGs), implement evidence-based CPGs, conduct review at least every two years, and annually select at least five hospital-wide priority areas to focus on the use of CPGs. The hospitals also required to demonstrate how the use of CPGs reduced clinical variation in processes and outcomes.

## Aim and Objectives

The project aims to review and optimize compliance to clinical pathways in order to reduce clinical variations, and when necessary, revise/update clinical pathways in accordance with evidence-based best practice (EBBP) and accreditation standards to achieve the following objectives:

Achieve 70% compliance of the use of clinical practice guidelines for selected DRG patients.

Increase the percentage of patients who are discharged within the expected length of selected DRG by 5% from the baseline data collected in the year 2019.

## Methodology

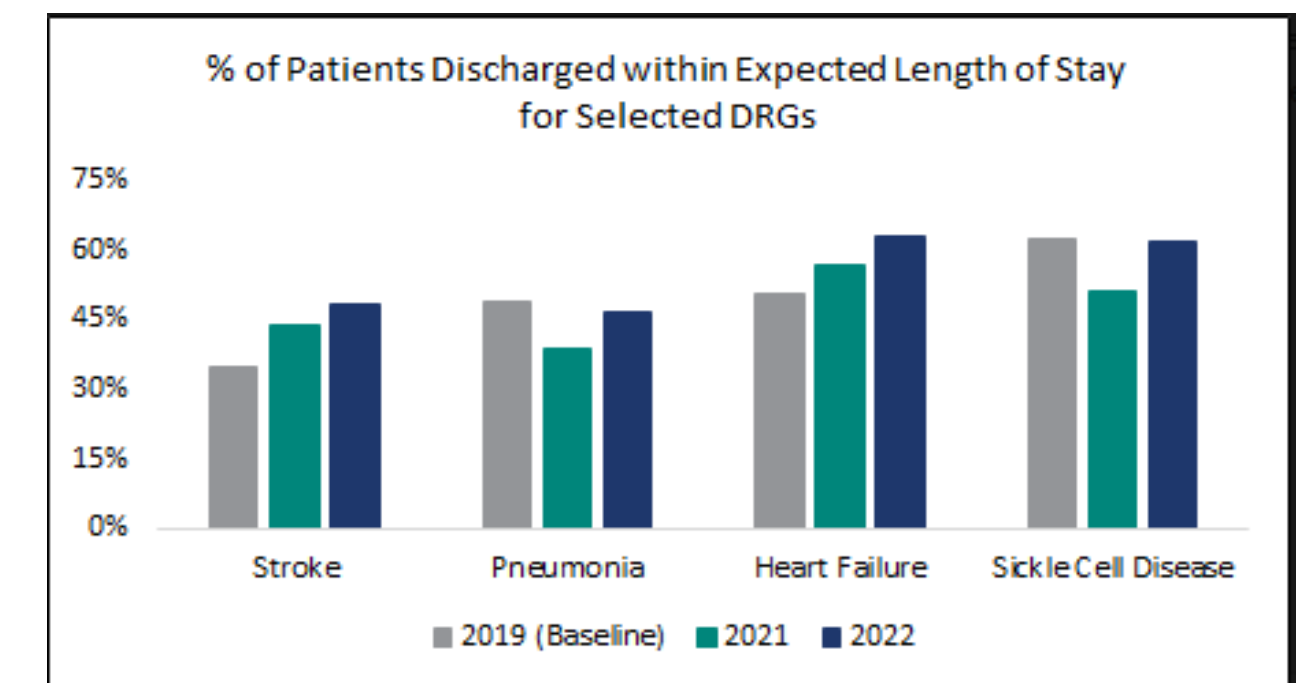
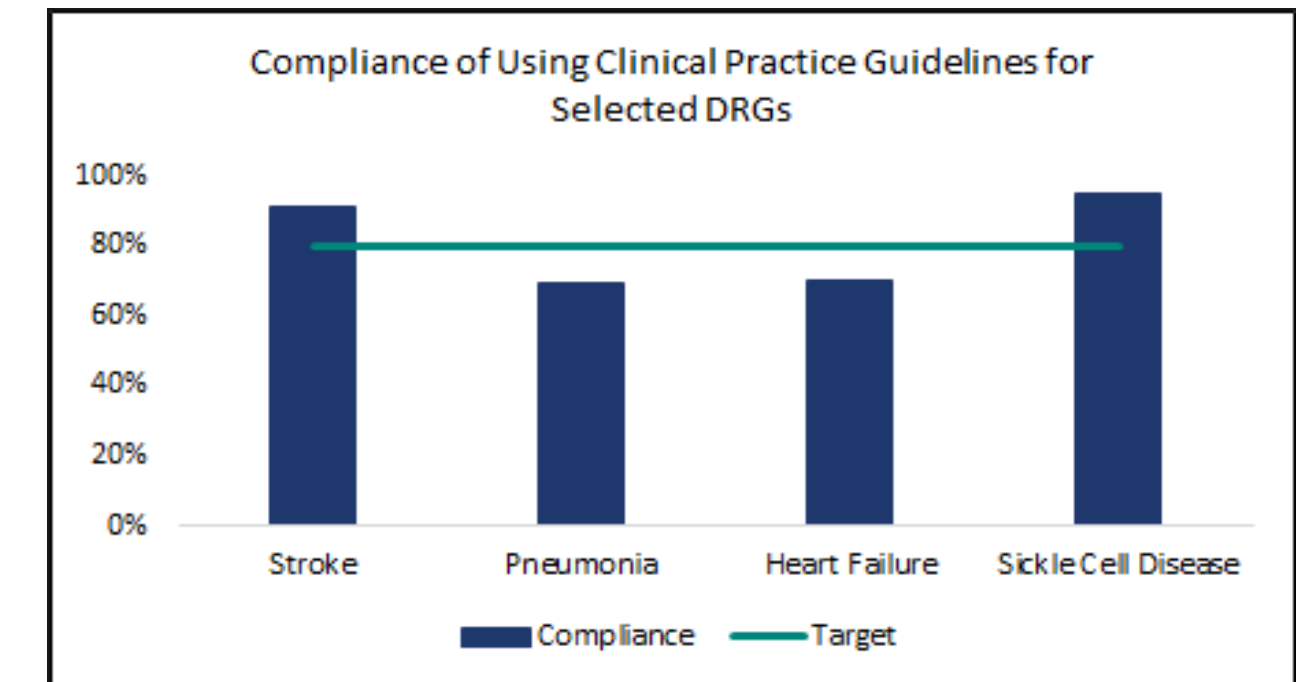
Hospital executive leadership formed a committee who will oversee development and review of required processes and clinical pathways in order to reduce clinical care variations. As part of the yearly review of the clinical pathways, Process Improvement Department identified top ten DRG hospital admissions, and selected stroke, pneumonia, heart failure, and sickle cell.

The clinical pathways for selected DRGs reviewed in collaboration with the multidisciplinary team members (physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and case managers, etc.) to ensure compliance with the EBBP, accreditation standards, and applicable InterQual guidelines.

Objectives were established in line with the hospital's strategic initiatives. A clinical audit was conducted to monitor compliance with the objectives.

## Results

Completed review of selected clinical pathways to optimize contents/elements in accordance with the EBBP, e.g., medication orders, laboratory and radiology requests, consultation referrals, and nursing care plans. Developed key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor the compliance with the objectives (length of stay and readmission rate). KPI data showed a decrease in length of stay and number of readmissions in some of the selected clinical pathways.



## Conclusion

Overall, we concluded that clinical practice guidelines or clinical pathways help standardized care and reduce clinical care variation. Standardized care improves healthcare quality, increase patient satisfaction, and enhance communication between healthcare providers.