Nemours Childrens Hospital Wins Two Florida Hospital Association Awards

A scoring system that helps protect patients from developing shock and sepsis was honored by the Florida Hospital Association (FHA) Thursday night as was a unique program aimed at reducing sensory overload during emergency room visits for children with autism. The FHA awarded the Leadership in Quality and Patient Safety Award for Nemours' sepsis scoring system and The Innovation of the Year in Patient Care Award for the hospital's REACH Program during The Celebration of Service Awards Ceremony in Orlando, Thursday night.

Nemours Children's Hospital (NCH) opened its doors five years ago, on October 22, 2012. This is the fourth time the FHA has honored Nemours with an Innovation of the Year Award and the fifth year the FHA honored the hospital.

Sepsis is a significant, life-threatening problem affecting hospitals across the country. Understanding the severity, providers at Nemours created a scoring system that calculates a patient's risk of shock and sepsis by collecting data through The Nemours Clinical Logistics Center (CLC). The CLC is a command center where paramedics track patients' vital signs and other indicators, around-the-clock.

"It's about doing the right thing, for the right patient, at the right time. We're focusing on preventing sepsis, rather than recognizing it after the fact," said Dr. Stephen Lawless, senior vice president and chief clinical officer of Nemours Children's Health System.

The score system is calculated by collecting data from the patient's bedside monitor and electronic health records. If the score reaches a certain threshold, paramedics in the center are prompted to assess the situation. If the child's risk score continues to increase and the patient is at an elevated risk of shock, a precursor to sepsis, a rapid-response team is immediately deployed to the bedside.

"Since the time Nemours implemented the shock and sepsis scoring, we've had considerable success," said Dr. Jennifer Setlik, emergency medicine physician at Nemours Children's Hospital. "Our teams in the Emergency Department and acute care units have not missed any cases of sepsis."

The FHA also honored Nemours Children's Hospital's REACH (Respecting Each Awesome Child Here) Program with The Innovation of the Year Award. REACH was designed specifically for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Sensory Processing Disorders, developmental delays, and mental health conditions.

REACH is one of the country's first-of-its-kind program started by nurse practitioner, Cara Harwell and co-lead by certified child life specialist, Emily Bradley. The program's care model covers all aspects of a child's visit and is designed to reduce negative experiences caused by the overwhelming conditions in the Emergency Department.

"When the patients arrive to the ED, the families self-identify that they have a child with autism or a similar condition. They have a chance to let us know what the patient likes and dislikes," said Cara Harwell, nurse practitioner at Nemours Children's Hospital. "We individualize their care by providing waiting accommodations as needed, distraction objects or we invite the child to our sensory-friendly exam room."

The REACH Program has spread beyond the Emergency Department and is being implemented in several other departments within NCH. Leaders at affiliated hospitals in the community have also expressed interest in launching REACH at those facilities.

The awards ceremony was held during the FHA's annual meeting on October 19 at the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress in Orlando.

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