

# REDUCED LENGTH OF STAY LEADS TO IMPROVED EFFICIENCY AND CARE

Case Study

Clinical Performance Improvement

St. Tammany Parish Hospital

Located in a thriving and growing community in Louisiana, St. Tammany Parish Hospital set its sights on reducing length of stay across all service lines.

However, when Hurricane Katrina struck in the late summer of 2005, occupancy rates soared and reached 92 percent by early 2006. The challenge—and the opportunity—to reduce length of stay became immediate and acute. The hospital needed more beds as hospital population grew by 28 percent, and at the same time needed to reduce its overall cost per discharge. As the hospital developed a long-term strategy including a 98-bed expansion, it continued to address the length-of-stay opportunity by focusing on the 10 highest-volume diagnosis-related groups (DRGs).

## COURSE OF ACTION

Using the **CareDiscovery™ Clinical Performance Improvement Solution** from the Healthcare business of Thomson Reuters, hospital leaders identified the highest-volume DRGs in all service lines as well as physicians with the longest length-of-stay opportunity. Data gathered from CareDiscovery was shared at monthly case management meetings, and strategies were developed to engage physicians with high length-of-stay histories in high-volume DRGs.

CareDiscovery provides a powerful view of hospital clinical performance, including valuable, objective



information that shows physician performance in comparison with their peers. Combined with education and extra attention by case managers, the data was used to show these physicians specific ways they could reduce length of stay without impeding positive outcomes. In addition, the hospital accelerated the development of its hospitalist program with the aim of reducing cost per discharge. Using CareDiscovery, hospital leaders continue to track the impact of the hospitalist program on length of stay and improved care.

## RESULTS

St. Tammany Parish Hospital's strategy to reduce both length of stay and cost per discharge, while simultaneously improving clinical outcomes, produced remarkable results.

- From 2005 to 2007, the Medicare average length of stay was reduced by more than half a day, from 5.7 to 5.1 days.



**ST. TAMMANY  
PARISH HOSPITAL**

**Location:**  
Covington, LA

**Size:**  
237 beds

**Scope and services:**  
St. Tammany Parish Hospital serves the Louisiana communities of western St. Tammany Parish and surrounding areas. Its many facilities encompass a breast center, heart center, hospice, outpatient facility, and two primary care doctors' offices. The not-for-profit hospital, which opened its doors in 1954, also offers home health, rehabilitation, and community wellness services.

**Solutions:**  
CareDiscovery™



- In the same period, total length-of-stay variance decreased from almost half a day greater than expected to a couple of hours greater than expected.
- During the two-year period, St. Tammany Parish Hospital realized over \$3 million in expense savings related to the reduction in the average Medicare length of stay.

“Outcomes of this magnitude are achieved only through a multidisciplinary approach,” said Sharon Toups, senior vice president and chief operating officer of St. Tammany Parish Hospital. “We realized it was critical to involve the entire Case Management Committee membership, including case management, revenue cycle, decision support, administrators, and physician leaders such as the director of hospital medicine. We understood that our focus on physician drivers of length of stay offered the greatest opportunity for success. The team proved that reducing length of stay does not impede outcomes. In fact, inpatient mortality and complications declined from 2005 to 2007.”

“The reduction in length of stay was achieved by breaking through barriers frequently erected between hospitals and physicians,” added Toups. “Comparative data was used to identify DRGs and physicians with high length of stay and then shared with those physicians. Working closely with high-opportunity physicians, Case Management used a physician-centric approach of assigning case managers. Hospitalists—who share the goal of greater efficiency—were assigned their own case manager to maximize length-of-stay reduction.”

In 2008, St. Tammany Parish Hospital was acknowledged for its accomplishments in the pursuit of excellence in performance improvement with a Thomson Reuters Insight Award. The Insight Award was established in 2005 to honor and recognize customers who have used Thomson Reuters Solutions and tools to achieve outstanding success at their organizations.

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**Sharon Toups**

Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer  
St. Tammany Parish Hospital

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Thomson Reuters  
777 E. Eisenhower Parkway  
Ann Arbor, MI 48108 USA  
Phone +1 800 366 7526

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