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## **Dashboard Benchmark Evaluation**

Kindred Healthcare offers support and care to individuals recovering from injury or illness. The organization addresses both the emotional and clinical needs of its patient population. Kindred Healthcare also customizes its services to the needs of the patients. The facility provides diverse services to its patient population, including contract rehabilitation services, sub-acute units, inpatient rehabilitation hospitals, hospice, home care, and transitional care hospitals (Kindred, n.d). In the context of end-of-life care, the organization provides hospice services to eligible Medicare patients, especially those with six months or fewer life expectancies. Patients from diverse backgrounds access these services as long as they qualify for Medicare benefits. Clients who enroll in hospice care only access palliative care to minimize their symptoms (Watts, 2016). Medicare caters for inpatient or in-home services like grief counseling, respite care, and pain relief. Kindred Healthcare's mission is to provide compassionate care to those diagnosed with a terminal illness and other health-related conditions.

## **Federal Healthcare Policies that Set Benchmarks**

State and Federal governments have standards of care that protect patients and their loved ones. The United States implemented the Social Security Act (Provisions 1102, 1861, and 1871/42) to recognize hospice care. The US Code of Federal Regulation, hospice regulations spell out the

conditions that must be met by hospice agencies to qualify for Medicare hospice benefits (Hospice Patients Alliance, n.d). Any hospice agency that violates the existing regulations risks being decertified or penalized. For instance, Kindred Healthcare was punished by the Department of Health and Human Services for violating the corporate integrity agreement (CIA). The facility had to pay a penalty of more than \$3 million because it forged its Medicare billing (Watts, 2016). The faking of Medicare billing also infringed on the False Claims Act. The facility was found guilty of billing Medicare for patients who did not qualify for hospice services, especially the expensive category. The company had failed to implement corrective measures as stipulated in the CIA agreement resulting in Medicare overpayments. The federal government is stringent on medical facilities that violate its healthcare policies and fail to meet the set benchmarks.

### **Evaluating Kindred Healthcare Benchmarks against National Benchmarks**

#### **Family Caregivers' Experience Dashboard from Kindred Hospice**

<b>Experience</b>	<b>Kindred Hospice</b>	<b>National Average</b>
Communication with family	81%	81%
Getting timely help	75%	78%
Treating patient with respect	91%	91%
Spiritual and emotional support	92%	90%
Help for symptoms and pain	74%	75%

Family training to take care of their patients	73%	75%
Hospice rating	76%	81%
Willingness to recommend the hospice	82%	82%

### **To Kindred Hospice Director**

Kindred Hospital focuses on enhancing the experience of hospice care patients and their families.

However, from my evaluation of data regarding the facility's performance, there are areas that need significant improvements to enhance the experience of those receiving hospice cares.

Below is an analysis of the data and the challenges that underperforming metrics pose on the overall performance of the facility

### **Dashboard Metrics Evaluation**

Kindred Hospice underperforms in some metrics that are crucial in improving the experience of hospice care patients. However, there are some performances that are above and within the stated national standards. For instance, there is effective communication between patients and

healthcare providers (81%), an aspect that permits the provision of personal-centered care.

Additionally, patient are respected and provided with spiritual and emotional support (91% and 92%, respectively). However, the facility underperformed in some aspects of its care delivery.

For instance, getting timely help at the facility is somewhat challenging (75% against the 78% national average). The facility is below average in terms of providing relief for symptoms and

pain (74% against 75% national average). Adequate symptom and pain management are crucial aspects of end-of-life and palliative care, a service that is underperforming at the facility.

Training of family members to take care of their loved ones is below the national average (73% against 75%) despite the emotional and psychological burden they are subjected to while taking care of their relatives. Because of these shortcomings, only 82% of the surveyed patients against 85% of the national average were willing to recommend the facility to others (Medicare.gov, n.d). Therefore, as the manager of hospice services, you must ensure that medics offer patients with timely help, manage their pain and symptoms, and train family members to enhance the quality of care given to hospice care patients.

### **Challenges for not Meeting Some Benchmarks in the Organization**

Providing immediate help such as pain management and training of caregivers remain a significant challenge at Kindred Hospice. Managing pain is a primary concern for health professionals. Although strong opioids exist, a majority of patients still complain of inadequate pain management, as in the case of those in Kindred Hospice care (Elmokhallalati et al., 2019). Lack of effective pain management results in patients experiencing poor quality of life due to discomfort. The resultant effect is patient dissatisfaction with the quality of care provided, and is less likely to recommend the facility to other people in need of hospice services. Training of

caregivers is also a challenge at Kindred Healthcare. Caregivers are subjected to complex tasks like communicating with medics, giving direct care to their sick relatives, balancing personal responsibilities and care obligations, and meeting logistical demands (LaValley, 2018). However, they lack formal skills and training in providing care to the sick like recognizing symptoms, managing medication, and practical approaches for moving patients. As a result, they are likely to develop depression and anxiety or cause medication errors. Therefore, these issues must be addressed to enhance the quality of care provided to hospice care patients at Kindred Hospice.

Kindred Healthcare can utilize its financial capital and competent workforce to address its challenges. The facility develops and trains its staff to sustain its competitiveness in the industry. Therefore, it should use these programs to educate their staff on the need to manage pain and inform caregivers of taking care of terminally ill patients. The company should also utilize its substantial financial capital to pay workers who dedicate their time to supporting caregivers to provide quality care to their sick relatives. Therefore, effective pain management and providing caregivers with the necessary information will improve the overall performance of the facility.

### **Ethical Action for Addressing the Underperforming Benchmark**

According to the principle of beneficence, health professionals are supposed to do that which is suitable for their patient. Medics must not inflict harm to their patients. Instead, they must remove or prevent damage by promoting good. Kindred Hospice care does not provide patients diagnosed with end-of-life conditions with immediate attention. Comfort care is crucial for hospice care patients. The care relieves or prevents suffering and boost the quality of life of patients in hospice care. End of life patients feel discomfort because of breathing problems,

temperature sensitivity, pain, digestive issues, skin irritation, and fatigue. It is the healthcare's responsibility to relieve these patients their suffering without factoring drug abuse or dependence in the future. Patients should be turned regularly to prevent and manage bed sores. Therefore, the hospital administrator must direct physicians, nurse practitioners, social workers, and allied health professionals to provide patients in hospice care with care whenever they need it. The strategy is effective in improving patient satisfaction and the quality of care provided.

Thanks for your time. Hope you will consider the recommended course of actions to enhance the experience of end-of-life care patients.

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