



Independence

HEALTH SYSTEM

TO MEDIA

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Independence Health System Recognized for Championing Community Health

CLARION, PA FEBRUARY 26, 2024 – Clarion Hospital, part of Independence Health System, was recognized by the Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) for implementing a care coordination program to address the needs of patients experiencing chronic health conditions, such as COPD, pneumonia, congestive heart failure, diabetes, and individuals determined to be at higher risk of hospital readmission.

Clarion Hospital's initiative was one of 13 recognized by The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) through its 2024 Achievement Awards. Started in 1978, the program recognizes hospitals and health systems that are taking innovative approaches to strengthening the safety and quality of care, enhancing operations and patients' experience, and partnering with their communities to address public health needs.

In 2021, Clarion Hospital established a care coordinator program focused on prevention, education, and coordination of care. The program aims to assist patients experiencing chronic health conditions navigate a number of health-related and social needs. When admitted to the hospital, patients complete an assessment form identifying their individual support requirements. Patients with chronic health conditions are often at high risk of rehospitalization, so a Care Transition Navigator is assigned to work with them upon discharge. The care navigator may help patients by scheduling follow-up appointments, coordinating transportation, or providing community resources to individuals needing food, disability, housing, or energy assistance. The care navigator contacts patients 7 days after being discharged from the hospital, then again at 30, 60, and 90 days to check in and provide additional support as needed.

“We are honored to be recognized by HAP as Community Champions for our care coordination program,” said Karen Allen, President of Clarion & Butler Hospitals. “As a health system, we strive to enhance our services to help improve community wellness and access to care. We are proud of the hard work and dedication of the staff and team of caregivers at Independence Health System Clarion Hospital.”

Since its inception, rates of hospital readmissions of patients experiencing chronic health conditions have gradually declined, along with the total cost of care. The care coordinators have assisted 415 patients since the program was implemented and have expanded their resources to include the newly added Food Institute and Lifestyle Coaching programs located at the Health & Wellness Center.

Clarion Hospital competed against organizations of a similar size for the Community Champions Award, which celebrates hospitals’ and health systems’ efforts to improve community health and access to care, advance health equity, and advocate for the health care community and patients. In total, there were 93 entries for this year’s Achievement Awards.

HAP President and CEO, Nicole Stallings said, “We are proud to announce the winners

of HAP's 2024 Achievement Awards, showcasing innovative, patient-centered projects that are making a difference in Pennsylvania. Strong health systems make strong communities and hospitals are central to our shared mission for a healthy Pennsylvania."

Additional information about the awards program and detailed descriptions of the winning projects are available [online](#).

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Nationally recognized for quality care, Independence Health System comprises Butler Memorial, Clarion, Frick, Latrobe and Westmoreland Hospitals with a combined bed count of 925. With more than 1,000 physicians and advanced practice providers and 7,300 employees, the System is now the third largest in western Pennsylvania serving a population base of 750,000 in a footprint spanning more than 10 counties.

The System includes tertiary programs that are rated among America's best for cardiac care and surgery by Healthgrades in its Top 100 and Top 50 designations, and one of only five in Pennsylvania to achieve a five-star rating in cardiac surgery. In similar fashion, the prestigious Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) bestowed its top three-star rating. Historically, less than 10 percent of programs within the STS data base achieve this elite standing. The hospitals of Independence Health System also have earned a host of accolades from such prestigious outlets and sources as US News and World Report, Newsweek Magazine, the American College of Radiology, the American College of Cardiology, the American College of Surgeons, the Joint Commission, Leapfrog and the American Heart/Stroke Association.

Locally owned and locally controlled, Independence Health System offers its patients low-cost, high-quality care across the care spectrum in such specialties as cardiology, cardiovascular and thoracic surgery, orthopedics and sports medicine, minimally invasive and robotic surgery, women's health and obstetrics, emergency medicine, behavioral health and primary care. Its network of outpatient centers sees more than 1.2 million visits annually. The homecare division further supports patients at all stages of life with home health and hospice services.

Independence Health System continues to change the healthcare landscape in western Pennsylvania by meeting patient needs through superb physician expertise, outstanding nursing, the latest in technology and programmatic depth.