

Leveraging Technology to Optimize Care: Virtual Nurse Discharge Program

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Background

- The COVID-19 pandemic spurred innovation and workflow redesign to optimize health care delivery across the care continuum
- Demand for inpatient acute care bed capacity increased during the pandemic
- Timely patient discharge a must to facilitate throughput
- In May 2020, nurse leaders at a 1,200-bed Magnet® hospital identified an opportunity to leverage and optimize existing technology through a Virtual Nurse Discharge (VND) program

Project Goals

- Conserve personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Facilitate throughput
- Support the bedside RN
- Bolster the patient experience by efficiently attending to the education and care coordination needs evident upon discharge

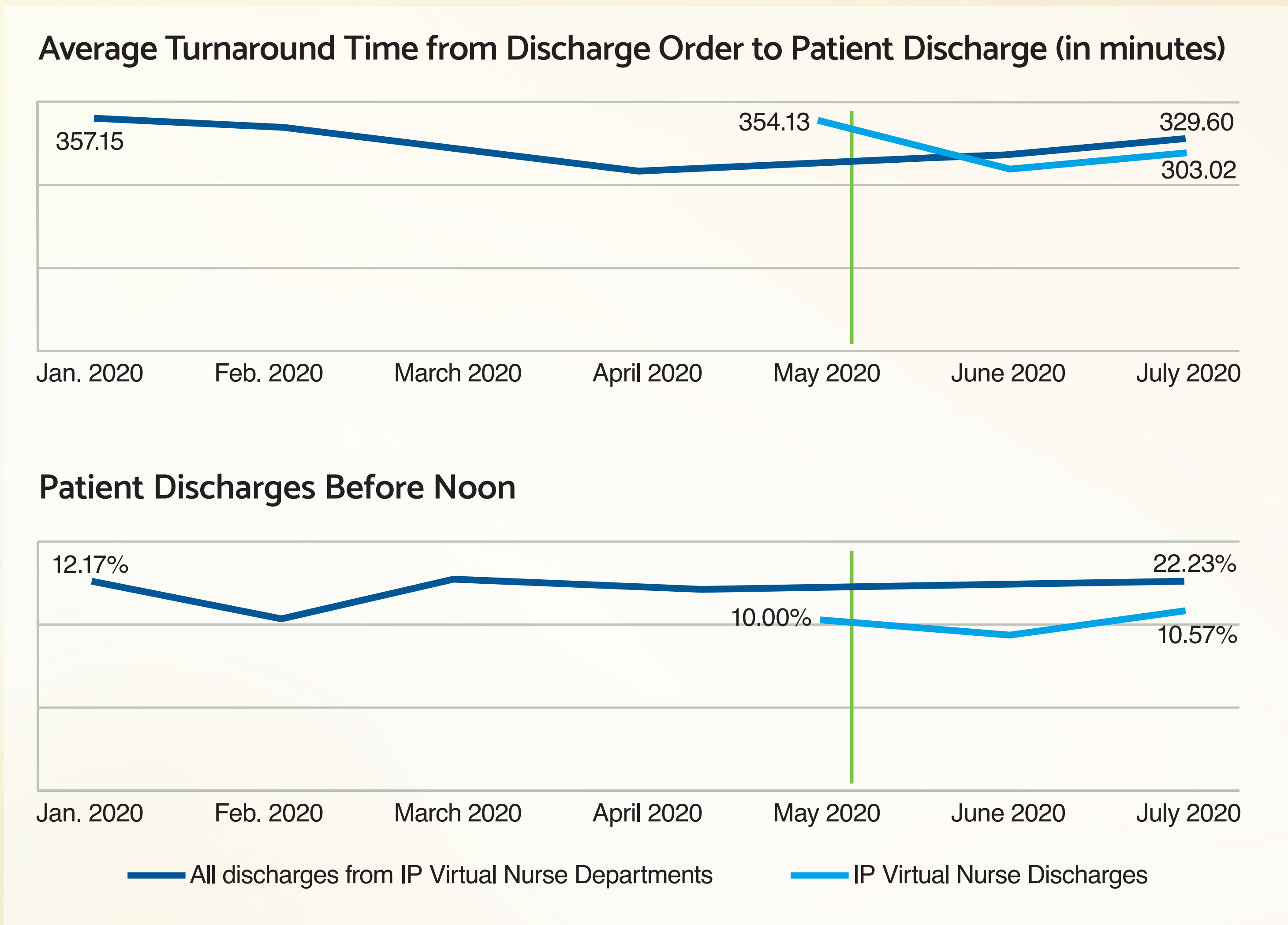
Methods

- Supported by Lewin’s model of change nursing
- Assembled and engaged a group of interprofessional stakeholders (clinical informatics, operations and nursing leadership) to:
 - Define project’s scope
 - Create project inclusion/exclusion criteria
 - Identify milestones and metrics
- Utilized an off-site RN to support care tasks that could be completed with limited physical interaction
- Incorporated existing telehealth/virtual technology and the use of individual, hand-held devices
- Launched in a 7-day period from idea to inception



Outcomes

- Pilot program initiated on one unit and quickly expanded across eight Medical-Surgical units
- One Virtual Nurse full-time equivalent (FTE) was responsible for 4.8% of all potential discharges (731/15,338) from May-November 2020
- Preliminary findings reflect an average decrease of > 30 minutes from traditional discharges to Virtual Nurse Discharges
- Encouraging trends are associated with discharge order to complete times and Virtual Discharges completed before noon



Key Takeaways

- RN - Provider communication processes are crucial
- Flexibility and the ability to adapt are central
- Rapid-cycle development with an outstanding “can-do” team of committed individuals led to a successful pilot that will be formalized and expanded

Next Steps

- Establish full-time budgeted positions
- Expand across workflows, locations and technologies
- Measure effects on length of stay and readmissions
- Integrate with other network telehealth/virtual efforts to enhance patient care and the patient experience

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