Priority Health's Tandem365 Program

To care for many of its Medicare members, Priority Health has partnered with Tandem365, an organization that delivers a comprehensive menu of health care and social services to at-risk seniors in their homes.

BACKGROUND:
Collaboration of Care

Priority Health wanted to provide more services than it could through its transitional home-care model. It chose to focus on better serving a specific kind of patient: seniors with multiple health care and social needs who find traditional ambulatory care impractical. Priority Health collaborated with five local non-profit skilled nursing facilities (SNF) that provide a range of levels of care and living options. Like Priority Health, the SNFs wanted to move more care delivery into patients’ homes.

The SNFs brought a local ambulance company into the conversations to explore whether or how emergency medical technicians (EMT) could use their specialized skills to provide some services in the home. This creative thinking required obtaining approval from the state of Michigan for EMTs to coordinate some in-home care with Priority Health’s medical directors, since EMTs in the state are normally required to transport patients they treat to an emergency room or call in their patient encounters to an ER physician. The SNFs and the ambulance companies then formed Tandem365. Tandem365 developed an integrated, at-home care model combining medical, behavioral and social health care that focuses on patients with a burden of illness whose psychosocial and financial challenges make them unable to access traditional ambulatory care. It currently serves about 150 patients, focusing on alleviating isolation, frailty, transportation issues and results of poverty, as well as illness.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS:
Creating a Life Plan

When Priority Health refers patients to Tandem365, a nurse and social worker partner with the primary care physician to assess the patient's medical, behavioral and social needs. The goal is to create a “life plan” through

Tandem 365: At a Glance

- Created to improve health and quality of life by keeping seniors at home whenever possible.
- Focuses especially on patients with social burdens such as isolation, poverty, frailty and lack of transportation.
- Delivers care and services at home that are not typically reimbursed.
- A behavioral health component marks the difference from more traditional home-based care.
- Meant to be a source of life-long support rather than a transitional care program.
which Tandem365 can support patients as long as they wish, rather than during a short time of acute need.

The referral process is proactive: Priority Health staff members work in the SNFs to help with discharge planning, which enables them to identify patients for ongoing support at home through Tandem365. Priority Health’s care managers use claims analytics data to identify those patients whose burden of disease and high use of services indicate they may benefit from the program.

The Tandem365 team provides direct care to patients in their home and also coordinates additional support from community or volunteer organizations, such as meal delivery, transportation to doctor’s appointments, chore services, adult day care or personal aides. The Tandem365 nurse or social worker accompanies the patient to doctor’s appointments or meets him or her in the emergency department, to provide care management and coordination.

**RESULTS:**

**Utilization Dropping**

Priority Health compared claims data for 53 members before and after they enrolled in Tandem365. The data show:

- A 38 percent decrease in inpatient stays.
- A 52 percent drop in emergency department visits.
- 46 percent fewer specialty visits.
- A 35 percent reduction in the total cost of care.

**A Patient Story: Before and After**

“Sandy” was a homeless woman living out of her car who suffered from severe migraine headaches. A Tandem365 team met with her at her car. They prescribed her pain medications and connected her with a social worker. Within a week, she had secured a permanent residence and was quoted as saying that she had never been cared for in this way.