

National Service and Civic Engagement Grant Competition FY 2015

Case Western University

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Purpose/Research Questions:

A multi-disciplinary team of Case Western Reserve University researchers will evaluate the efficacy of a volunteer-led coaching intervention designed to reduce hospital readmissions. Nurse-led transition coaching have proven effective at reducing hospital readmissions and medical costs. However, diffusion of such interventions has been undermined by the scarcity of registered nurses and hospital cost pressures. Our intervention tests a task-shifting strategy for addressing this dilemma. If well-trained volunteers could coach patients effectively, it could allow for much wider diffusion of services that reduce medical costs and improve clinical outcomes. Dissemination activities include creating an online toolkit to promote model adoption and providing free coaching training to AmeriCorps volunteers. Findings of positive effects could motivate further initiatives and research on the role volunteer organizations could play to productively augment traditional medical providers in delivering cost-effective interventions.

Building on existing efforts to train AmeriCorps volunteers as transition coaches, the research will examine the effects of a randomized volunteer-led coaching intervention on readmission rates, medical costs, and patient satisfaction. Approximately 1100 patients will receive the volunteer-led coaching intervention over the two-year intervention period of the project. Effects will be estimated relative to usual care, as well as relative to a similar nurse-led coaching intervention to test for potential inferiority of the volunteer-led intervention. Through qualitative interviews and thematic content analysis of intervention phone call recordings, we will explore possible mechanisms behind program effectiveness and identify opportunities to improve the training of volunteer coaches.