



Blue Bag Initiative (BBI)

The Challenge

Hospital readmissions due to medication-related issues are complex. Polypharmacy, prescribing problems, drug selection and adherence issues are common risk factors. To mitigate these risks, care teams must prioritize interventions that increase patient safety and reduce medication-related hospital utilization, including emergency department (ED) visits. This may involve improving care transitions, addressing medication reconciliation errors, patient education and ensuring appropriate medication monitoring, especially in older populations of greater risk.

The Idea

The Blue Bag Initiative (BBI) helps pharmacists use a turn-key medication review program that identifies potential adverse drug events (pADE). It supports medication reviews and reconciliation in community settings and at hospital discharge. BBI involves pharmacists and empowers patients to be more engaged with their safe medication use to avoid unnecessary hospitalizations. BBI participants use program data reports to determine cost-savings, patient activation and the impacts of identifying pADEs.

The Results

Since BBI's launch in September 2019 and March 2024, BBI participants in the Health Quality Innovation Network screened 18,372 patients for comprehensive medication reviews. Of those screened, 12,438 (68%) had a pADE identified and 11,392 (62%) were able to state the purpose of their medications. These reviews demonstrate cost-savings attributed to avoidable ADEs of between \$3,995,910 and \$5,853,503.¹

Steps for Implementation

1. Obtain leadership support.
2. Identify a champion and a team.
3. Obtain the BBI materials.
4. Meet with Health Quality Innovators (HQI) Advisors to discuss implementation steps, including data entry and reports.
5. Schedule start date and timeline.
6. Track monthly data.

¹ Savings are calculated using Potential Cost Savings by Prevention of Adverse Drug Events with A Novel Medication. VCU Health.

Tips for Success

1. Involve a pharmacist!
2. Review your data to identify trends and educational opportunities.
3. Consult with HQI to help you set up strong processes and data tracking.
4. Share your results with leadership to show program effectiveness.

Resources

[Blue Bag Informational Video](#)

[Use a Pharmacist to Conduct Comprehensive Medication Reviews at Hospital Admission or Discharge | HQIN](#)

[Turning the Brown Bag Blue: Q and A with HQIN's Pharmacist, Cindy Warriner](#)

For BBI assistance or start-up, email bluebag@hqi.solutions and provide your name and contact information. You can also reach HQIN by phone at 877.731.4746.

Put new ideas to work in your community:

The Blue Bag Initiative is one of several care transition interventions highlighted in HQI's [Ideas That Work](#) series. To explore other strategies for strengthening care coordination activities in your community, check out our [YouTube Playlist](#) and the [HQIN Resource Center](#).

This material was prepared by Health Quality Innovators (HQI), a Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Views expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of CMS or HHS, and any reference to a specific product or entity herein does not constitute endorsement of that product or entity by CMS or HHS. 12SOW/HQI/QIN-QIO-0805-06/17/24