

Quality Improvement Initiative: Part 1

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Iron Mountain VA Medical Center in Michigan provides essential healthcare services to veterans both on-site and off-site through telemedicine and telephone consultation. The services range from primary care services, mental care services, veteran women's care, social services programs, specialty care, and other services. The crucial measure being evaluated for hospital performance is "timely and effective care" especially healthcare personnel influenza vaccination. This measure reflects the hospital's efficiency in reducing infection and unnecessary usage of antibiotics, deaths, and associated healthcare complications. This paper examines Iron Mountain VA's performance on this measure, compares it with state and national averages, and explores strategies for improvement through SMART goals and evidence-based policies.

Selected Hospital

The selected hospital is Iron Mountain VA Medical Center, Michigan. The facility serves around 20,000 veterans across 25 counties in Michigan and Wisconsin. The healthcare teams are guided by the needs of the veteran and their families and caregivers. The facility is committed to providing all eligible veterans with exceptional health care services with the least amount of disruption to Veteran lives (U.S Department of Veterans Affairs. n.d). The services are accessible on-site and virtually through telehealth and telephone consultation. The nature of services provided by this facility includes primary care services which comprise prescription, Medications, and pharmacist consultation (U.S Department of Veterans Affairs. n.d). Other services offered by the facility's strong network of family and internal medicine specialists include primary care, labs and blood work, mental healthcare, women's health care, specialty care radiology, social programs, and services telehealth, and all urgent care for minor and non-

emergency services (U.S Department of Veterans Affairs. n.d).

Quality Improvement Measure

The Iron Mountain VA Medical Center, Michigan under the category “the timely and effective care” Healthcare professional vaccination for influenza, reported a score of 69 percent for this measure. This percentage represents the healthcare workers given influenza vaccination. The total healthcare working in this facility is around 876 but only 69 percent are vaccinated indicating that only 604 healthcare workers are up to date with influenza vaccination while the remaining 276 healthcare workers are not up to date (Medicare.gov, 2025). The national average for influenza immunization is 80% and the state of Michigan average is 81 percent indicating that the facility reports a lower percentage than the national and state average (Medicare.gov, 2025). This percentage indicates a low performing quality and patient issues indicating a high likelihood of virus spread among co-workers and patients.

Importance of Measure

Ensuring there is timely and effective care requires the facility to ensure the healthcare workers are up to date with influenza vaccination as one way of preventing hospital contagion of influenza. The joint commission requires healthcare facilities to meet standard IC.02.04.01 which is related to infection control practice related to the environment of care (Willis, 2021). The facilities are mandated to offer influenza vaccination programs to staff and licensed independent practitioners. However, this standard does not bind independent licensed practitioners for accreditation but the accredited healthcare facility is expected by the Joint Commission to pay for the influenza vaccination. This standard is only applicable to staff and licensed independent practitioners when care, treatment, or services are provided on-site but

when provided off-site such as telemedicine and telephone consultation this standard is not applicable (Willis, 2021).

Failure to meet this standard the facility may face conditional accreditation status to potential loss of accreditation altogether but that will depend on the severe non-compliance (Willis, 2021). The non-compliance will increase patient safety such as increased readmission rates, increased mortality rates, and patient dissatisfaction which in some way may impact the hospital's good reputation and increase penalties from the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) impacting the facility's financial status (Wood et al., 2024). Therefore, compliance with the measure by being timely in enrolling influenza vaccination program will help improve the facility's compliance with joint commission standard IC.02.04.01, and prevent hospital higher infection transmission rates, especially in patients with chronic illnesses. Also, compliance will reduce penalties and improve reimbursement hence positively impacting the hospital's financial status.

SMART Goals

To improve Iron Mountain VA's performance on timely and effective care through improving healthcare personnel vaccination, the following SMART goals are proposed.

- to reduce the infection rate in the facility by increasing the hospital personnel vaccination rate for staff and licensed practitioners to 90 percent through providing accessible vaccination sites by December 31, 2025
- Implemented targeted education sessions for all staff and licensed practitioners on infection control practice to increase vaccination adoption rates by March 31, 2025.
- To implement a real-time tracking and reporting system for hospital-acquired infections especially influenza, vaccination rates, and adoption rates to increase compliance by



October 31, 2025.

Policies to Improve Measures

Evidence-based practice as clearly documented by the Joint Commission, recommends several measures that would help achieve “timely and effective care” measures, especially in improving the vaccination rate for healthcare personnel vaccination rate on influenza. Joint recommends the hospital establish influenza vaccination programs to be offered to licensed independent practices and staff, and educate them on influenza vaccine, non-vaccine control, and prevention measures (Ibrahim et al., 2022). The commission also recommends the expansion of influenza vaccination sites which are accessible to the staff, evaluating the vaccination adoption rates, and documenting the reason for declining influenza vaccination. Studies have established that vaccination of healthcare workers would reduce flue illnesses, medical visits, antibiotic use, and flue-related deaths (Clari et al., 2024). In addition, educating the healthcare workers will help improve the adoption rate of vaccinates ensuring timely prevention of infection spread in the facility and timely containment of the contagion of the influenza virus (Johnson, & Sollecito, 2020).

Conclusion

The selected hospital is Iron Mountain VA Medical Center, Michigan. The facility serves around 20,000 veterans across 25 counties in Michigan and Wisconsin. The facility offers a broad of primary care, mental health services, specialty, and other healthcare services offered on-site and through telephonic consultation. The quality improvement measures include, “Timely and effective care’ healthcare professional influenza vaccination is 69 percent suggesting the facility performs poorly based on the national average and average. The Joint Commission

standard IC.02.04.01 expects the healthcare professional influenza vaccination rate to be high for the facility to be categorized as complying with the standard. Compliance will result in improved patient outcomes, reduced infection rates reduced penalties, and improved reimbursement which impacts hospital status. Evidence-based practice established that vaccination for healthcare professionals would reduce flue illnesses medical visits, antibiotic use, and flue-related deaths.



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