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A Speedier Recovery After C-Sections

Saint Peter's utilizes new model of care for women after c-sections.

By [Shelby Vittek](#) | November 6, 2018 | Appears in the [November 2018](#) issue

The average hospital stay among women after a cesarean section is about four days. A new initiative at **[Saint Peter's University Hospital](#)** in New Brunswick aims to reduce that to two.

In November 2016, the hospital implemented the Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) model to accelerate recovery time for c-section patients. The program is targeted at women undergoing elective c-sections (including repeat c-sections). Through an app called SeamlessMD, doctors engage patients with reminders, tasks, education and daily milestone tracking. Women begin using the app at least four weeks before their scheduled delivery and continue using it when they return home.

One of the initiative's goals is to reduce use of prescription opioids after surgery. "We write 260 million narcotic prescriptions in this country every year," says Dr. Attila Kett, chair of the department of anesthesia at Saint Peter's, and the physician who introduced ERAS at the hospital. "We're trying to reduce in-hospital narcotic use because it corresponds with home narcotic use. If you use less in the hospital, you need less at home."

In the hospital, women are urged to get on their feet just six hours after surgery, and non-narcotic pain medication is encouraged. Once patients are discharged, doctors monitor their medication use through the app.

The ERAS model originated in England in 2012. The program at Saint Peter's is among the first of its kind in the United States. The hospital is already seeing results. Over the past year, patients who have used SeamlessMD have cut their stay by one and a half days.

"Obviously the goal is to have less c-sections, but in certain cases they are required," says Kett. "Our goal is to make women who do need them more comfortable and knowledgeable."

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SAINT PETER'S UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Dr. Attila Kett, chairman, Department of Anesthesiology

Q: Can you describe the enhanced recovery after surgery program being used at Saint Peter's?

A: It's a philosophy of care we implemented in 2016 to enhance our obstetrics program. Designed initially to help women experiencing a Caesarean section recover more efficiently and more quickly, enhanced recovery after surgery is based on three principles: using a standardized protocol of care; educating and empowering patients in the decision-making process; and involving our staff in a multidisciplinary fashion.

Q: Why has the program been so successful?

A: Largely because it's not a program initiated by any single department. It's based on a multidisciplinary model – anesthesia, nursing, obstetrics, and other areas working together. It also has meant breaking down a lot of dogmas, or old ways of doing things, that may have actually been harmful in the past, such as the overuse of opioids to address pain, not mobilizing after surgery, and not eating or drinking right away.

Q: Can you describe a situation where a patient has benefitted from the enhanced recovery after surgery program?

A: One patient was recovering well at home after undergoing a successful C-section. Our standard of care includes the use of remote monitoring through a smart phone app that provides instant and actionable data. Each day after surgery she continued to fill out a daily survey. On the tenth day, we noticed she reported increased pain and discoloration in her wound. We reached out to her and she was immediately placed on antibiotics, which cleared up an infection and helped her avoid being readmitted.

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Saint Peter's Healthcare System expands use of patient engagement technology to improve patient experience across New Jersey

By
Staff Writer

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February 26, 2018

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J.

For the past year, Saint Peter's Healthcare System has been a leader in patient experience in New Jersey by providing innovative patient engagement technology proven to empower patients, reduce anxiety, and increase patient satisfaction. Due to outstanding results last year, Saint Peter's Healthcare System is now scaling SeamlessMD's patient engagement and quality improvement platform across the enterprise as standard of care for patients undergoing caesarean sections and total joint replacement.

Saint Peter's first implemented SeamlessMD for its caesarean section patients in November 2016. Patients using SeamlessMD are engaged before and after surgery via smartphone, tablet and computer. The program includes reminders, tasks, tailored education and daily milestone tracking to help patients follow Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS), a proven model for accelerating recovery. Based on what patients record throughout their journey, they receive automated feedback on how to self-manage common concerns. Providers are also able to monitor patients remotely using a real-time dashboard, allowing patients to stay connected with the care team, particularly at home after leaving the hospital.

"I was very happy I had SeamlessMD," says a Saint Peter's patient who used the technology. "The experience was much better than my first C-section! It was like a friend checking up on you. I loved how the nurses would check in. This made my second recovery so much better!"

By early in 2017, the program had produced outstanding results of reductions in hospital length of stay, which were presented at the American Society of Anesthesiologists' Practice Management Conference in January 2017. Over the past year, Saint Peter's has used SeamlessMD to reduce hospital length of stay by 1.5 days, allowing patients go home sooner and producing significant cost savings for the health system.

Attila Kett, MD, chair of Anesthesia at Saint Peter's and champion for the initiative, says: "The biggest challenge that SeamlessMD helped us solve is how to educate our patients. It is clearly extremely important that patients know the benefits of this program and become empowered so they can make their own decisions. With SeamlessMD, our length of stay is dropping – even exceeding our optimistic predictions because our patients now feel safe despite going home earlier, as they have the knowledge that we're able to monitor their recovery remotely and intervene should there be a problem."

Due to this success in obstetrics and the advent of the Total Joint bundled payments, the health system saw this as a way to succeed in bundles while improving the patient experience, Patricia Richards, director of CMS Innovations & Value-Based Programs at Saint Peter's, explains, "We are navigating changes with value-based care, and having SeamlessMD provides patients confidence to recover at home knowing they will still be connected to their care team through SeamlessMD. We receive automatic, real-time updates on the patients' status, whether they are at home or a facility."

Alfred Tria, MD, chief of Orthopaedic Surgery at Saint Peter's, is excited about the technology for the orthopaedics program, saying "having an older patient population, it is important to find new ways to keep our patients engaged with our care pathway. Since launching SeamlessMD in our Total Joint Replacement program this past summer, we have already seen significant benefit with using the platform to 'prehabilitate' patients prior to surgery, achieve higher patient compliance with protocols and helping patients feel more supported while recovering at home."

With a continued commitment to a high quality care and the patient experience, Saint Peter's plans to expand the program to additional clinical areas in 2018.

"We're thrilled to scale the technology across the enterprise as it allows us to reach more patients, and helps drive change for the industry. Saint Peter's Healthcare System's values mirrors our own

ambition to influence positive change for the patient experience and for healthcare,” adds Joshua Liu, MD, CEO of SeamlessMD.

About Saint Peter’s Healthcare System

Saint Peter’s Healthcare System Inc., parent company of the Saint Peter’s healthcare delivery system, is comprised of Saint Peter’s University Hospital, a 478-bed acute-care teaching hospital and state-designated children’s hospital and regional perinatal center; Saint Peter’s Foundation, the fundraising arm of the hospital; Saint Peter’s Health and Management Services Corp., which oversees outpatient facilities, including the CARES Surgicenter and New Brunswick Cardiac Cath Lab; and Saint Peter’s Physician Associates, a network of primary and specialty care physician practices. Saint Peter’s Healthcare System is sponsored by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Metuchen and is a major clinical affiliate of Rutgers Biomedical Health and Sciences. For more information about Saint Peter’s Healthcare System, please visit www.saintpetershcs.com or call 732-745-8600.