

Observation Assistants: Sitter Effectiveness and Industry Measures

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Nursing Economics®
THE JOURNAL FOR HEALTH CARE LEADERS

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http://www.nursingconomics.net/necfiles/Harding_Sitters.pdf

Methods:

Interventions:

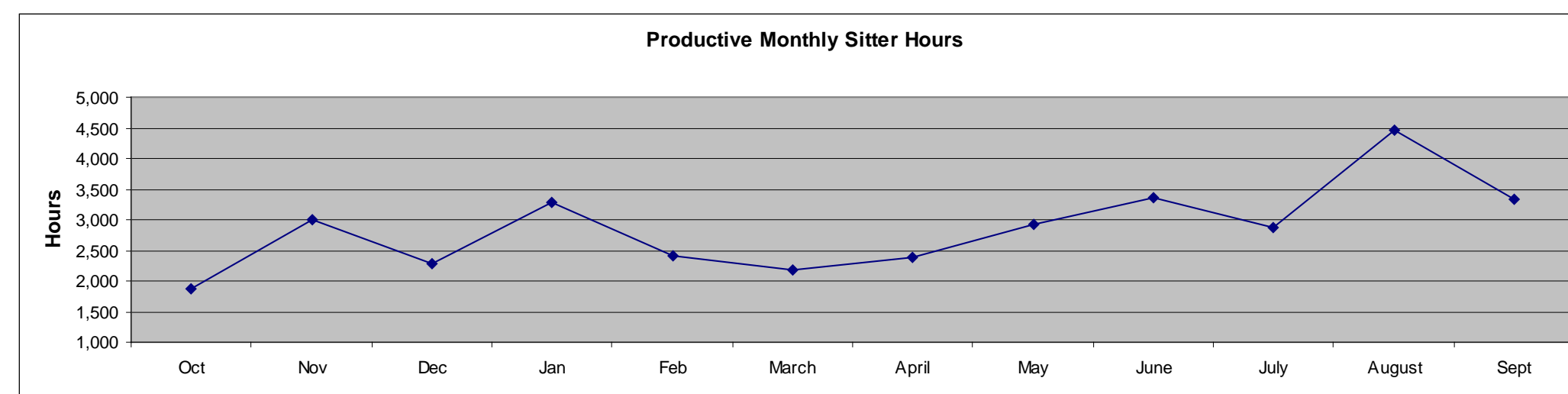
- Average Daily Census construct was used to present the data
- Nurse Manager & Nurse Supervisor clinical review of patients to determine alternative interventions and sitter appropriateness
- Electronic Requisition of Sitters by direct care providers to improve the requisition process and data tracking
- Use of the SAD PERSON & Morse Fall Score for determining indication for use of a sitter
- Pay rate change to \$10 per hour for all sitter
- Sitter Education Program for sitters
- Increased hiring and use of per diem sitters to decrease overtime

Purpose:

The use of observation assistants (sitters) is a means for direct observation of patients for the purpose of providing a safer environment for the patient. There are no defined industry standards for the use, efficiency, or financial measure of sitters. This project sought to improve the effectiveness, utilization and financial costs of sitters.

Design:

Performance improvement (PI) project prospective is designed to study and improve the processes of providing healthcare services to meet the needs of patients and stakeholders.



Setting:

This PI project occurred in a free standing 140 bed acute care hospital that receives 54,000 emergency department visits annually, in suburban Massachusetts.

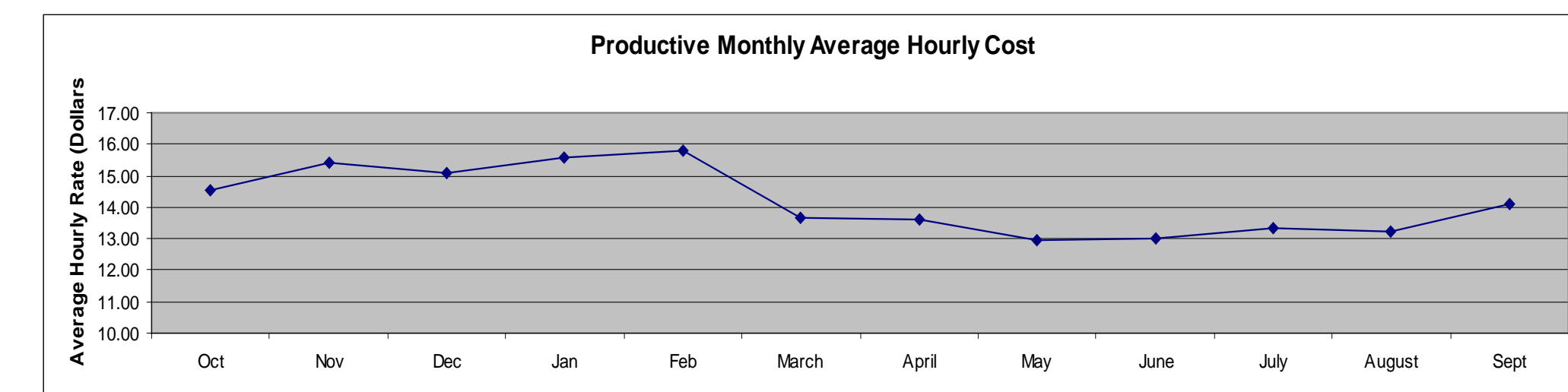
Participants / Subjects:

The subject was the process of sitter requests and utilization. The registered nurses with a bachelor of science in nursing or masters' degrees were only 31% of the active staff and were 96% female.

Results / Outcomes:

After implementation of the interventions:

- *Effectiveness:* No elopement or assaultive behaviors documented for patients with a sitter. Fall rate was not affected by sitter use
- *Utilization:* Actual sitter Average Daily Census first 5 months and last 7 months. ADC is a useful construct for displaying the data for sitters.
- *Financial Expense:* Decreased the average hourly rate by \$1.89 or 12.4%
- Reduced the percent of overtime as the total dollars from 26.8% to 15.6%



Implications:

The use of sitters had no relationship to fall rate, assaultive behaviors or self harm. There were no relationships between ED or inpatient volume and actual sitter use. The interventions used to reduce the cost of sitters were effective. The ADC construct is suggested for comparison and industry standardization. Research is needed to determine the effectiveness of sitters.