

You've probably heard the popular phrase, "it's the little things that matter most." Clinicians witness this expression firsthand in two different ways. On one hand, a simple "thank you" from a patient or caregiver after a long day can mean the world to a clinician. But during their day-to-day work with their patients, the little things could also change a patient's life.

This powerful expression transforms into a methodology perfected by clinicians around the world. Each detail provided during their interactions can help to better piece together or establish a diagnosis or an action plan for care.

With over 15 years of experience in clinical and operational roles in the healthcare industry, Bobbie Abel, naviHealth's Director of Clinical Operations, can attest to the importance of details. She recently encountered a heartwarming story involving a naviHealth Skilled Inpatient Care Coordinator (SICC) and how their attention to detail greatly contributed to better outcomes for a particular patient.

Bobbie: I'd like to share a story in honor of National Clinicians Week about how a SICC's ability to focus on the details of each of their patients helped save a life - and potentially hundreds more - at one of our partnering health systems.

During a routine interdisciplinary team meeting (IDT), a female patient suffering from congestive heart failure (CHF) was discussed. She was unfortunately declining physically and emotionally. While discussing the latest assessment of the patient, our SICC realized that the patient's weight was not addressed during the update of the patient.



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It is very important to establish a daily weight assessment for patients with CHF, as a sudden dip or rise in weight can mean that the patient is retaining fluid (edema) which can cause significant swelling of the feet or ankles. When a patient's weight increases, it is typically a vital sign that there is a change in the patient's overall health and something significant is happening.

Once this piece of information was captured, the care team quickly discovered something

was wrong with the patient: there had been an unexplained 12-pound weight gain in two weeks. This led the care team to schedule a consultation with the patient's cardiologist office. Unfortunately, the cardiologist's office's first available opening was in six weeks.

Due to the patient's unexplained weight gain, as well as her declining state, she needed to be seen by the cardiologist as soon as possible. When the SICC called the cardiologist back to advocate on the patient's behalf, the SICC made sure to stress the magnitude of the situation by highlighting the sudden weight gain. Once the cardiologist's office was notified of the current state of the patient and recent related health events, the appointment was prioritized and rescheduled for the next available business day.

Undoubtedly, without the SICC's involvement, this patient would have been sent to the emergency room and likely readmitted to the hospital for exacerbation of her CHF. Further, the patient would likely have had an adverse experience, continuing a cycle of setbacks and recovery, many times losing the functional gains achieved each time. This clinical impact, plus the potential financial implications to the healthcare system related to the readmission would have yielded negatively.

This SICC went above and beyond the call of duty by honing in on details that otherwise may have been overlooked. However, what happened next was just as important. Once this communication barrier was identified by the SICC, the entire department was re-educated to make sure that weight was covered during IDT meetings for CHF patients so that this critical detail would not impact a patient's care in the future.

As for the most important stakeholder in this story, the CHF patient, the cardiologist appointment led to a positive outcome and the care team was able to curb the weight gain to keep her out of the hospital and on her way back to post-acute care recovery. Importantly, added stress on the patient, family and caregivers was avoided.

Clinicians help to change patients' lives thanks to their dedication, unwavering commitment and support for their patients- and each small detail can lead to better care for the whole patient. Their hard work and drive to continuously improve health care is inspiring.