

Faces Behind-the-Scenes Profile...

Cindy Reedy:

13 Years of Monitoring—And Advancing—Patient Wellbeing via Active Listening, Authenticity, and Attention to Detail

One of the hallmarks of the alternate-site infusion field is the intense clinical monitoring that takes place throughout the course of a patient's therapy. Monitoring is important with any drug regimen, but especially critical for patients who are receiving—and often self administering—IV drugs in the home setting. In order to achieve positive outcomes, clinicians need to be assured that the care plan is being followed, and that the patients are responding to the care that's being provided. Although the tried and true methods of blood draws, lab results, and physical exams are a clinician's primary measures of progress, other, less obvious tools also exist.

Meet Cindy Reedy, Customer Service Coordinator for Advanced Infusion Services in Akron, Ohio. Reedy is responsible for communicating with patients and their families on issues such as reordering supplies, arranging deliveries, answering questions, and general

troubleshooting for a wide spectrum of topics related to the logistics of delivering care to patients. As one of the primary patient contact points within the provider organization, however, she is in a good position to read how patients are feeling—physically and emotionally. That, according to Director of Pharmacy Services, Ryan Garst, Pharm.D., R.Ph., CGP, is an added tool in monitoring—and advancing—overall patient wellbeing.

Take the Time to Listen

Over the 13 years that she's worked for Advanced Infusion, Reedy has heard it all—largely because she takes the time to actively listen. "Cindy exemplifies the concept of patients first," exclaims Garst. "She offers an ear for listening for patients, caregivers, and other family members."

While compassionate listening already goes above and beyond, Reedy is actively collecting details that, based on her experience, she



Cindy Reedy, Customer Service Coordinator for Advanced Infusion Services in Akron, Ohio

knows can be used to improve customer service. She shares these observations with clinical and delivery staff to ensure that the patient's needs are met and that their "customer experience" exceeds expectations. "She pays attention to details like what time of day works best for calling them, who is the backup contact, and so on," explains Garst. "She also passes on information that's helpful to the clinical, reimbursement, and delivery staff."

In the three years that he has been director at Advanced, Garst says he consistently hears comments from Reedy's co-workers that reflect her ability to not only

Editor's Note: Could your business thrive without the knowledge, skills and experience demonstrated by the personnel in the warehouse, the technicians, intake staff, dieticians, drivers and other critical individuals who display the passion and caring for the patient through the work they do everyday? NHIA utilizes this periodic INFUSION department to better recognize and examine these indispensable faces behind-the-scenes!

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do her job, but make it easier for others to do theirs as well. “Other employees will often comment to me that Cindy was ‘so helpful,’ ‘made things run so smoothly,’ and ‘always knows everything about the patients,’” he explains.

That attention to detail and teamwork has earned Reedy professional recognition in addition to the adulation of her colleagues. She won the VNSA Smith Memorial Award for Outstanding Clerical Staff in 2008. VNSA, or Visiting Nurse Service Affiliates, is the sister organization to Advanced Infusion Service.

Critical Details

In addition to lending a friendly ear, Reedy has developed a skill for picking out important details that may affect the way care is delivered. “She is very in tune with issues related to elderly patients because of her family experience and she has really brought that to her job and made others more aware,” continues Garst. “When she’s on the phone arranging for a delivery, she’ll ask the patient how they are feeling, or do they need any help.”

This is especially helpful with this patient group, he continues, because things can change so quickly and so many issues can affect their ability to continue care in the home. “We’ve had instances where a patient has shown rapid decline and we needed to intervene,” explains Garst.

Reedy serves as an informal member of the team of point people monitoring older adult patients for signs of dementia or other clues that they may need to be re-evaluated. “If she thinks they sound confused, she’ll ask them more questions or to perform a task such as counting remaining supplies. If there’s anything that concerns her, she’ll contact the nursing agency and a nurse will go to the house to check it out.”

For example, Reedy’s close relationship with an elderly parenteral nutrition patient and his wife led to her quick identification of a change in the wife’s status. Reedy then notified Garst that the wife had suffered an injury and was not able to perform as the caregiver. Because the patient was too weak to carry out many of the tasks related to self administration—lifting the bag, spiking the tubing—the development could have led to his being admitted to a skilled nursing facility until his wife recovered.

“Cindy immediately recognized the situation and alerted us,” recalls Garst. “Thanks to her, we were able to work with the family and the folks at their assisted living facility to cover the extra care until the wife returned home.”

Caring Details

Reedy pays attention to the smaller—but also significant—details as well, he adds. “With that same couple, Cindy spent time each week lis-

tening to the wife—the good things, the bad things.” Over the course of those conversations, she learned about important dates and milestones, and took the time to acknowledge them. “When the patient turned 90, she sent him a birthday card and cake, and on the couple’s 60th wedding anniversary, she called to congratulate them.”

Sadly, after six or seven years on service, the patient passed. “Cindy spoke with his wife and just listened to her, as obviously she was upset after losing her husband of more than 60 years,” Garst recalls. To this day, she will occasionally give the wife a call and “check in.”

“The whole AIS team was close with the couple,” he says, “but Cindy held a special place in the wife’s heart—she truly is an extended member of their family.”

Passion for Compassion

Reedy’s compassion for patients and their families is authentic and runs very deep, according to Garst. It can show up even when she is focused on an important job function, such as tracking down an infusion pump. Frequently, pumps go missing—patients are re-admitted to the hospital, moved to a skilled nursing facility, or pass away, leaving the family with a device that they no longer need, nor know what to do with. Tracking devices down under such dire circumstances requires very good detective skills, and often, a special touch.

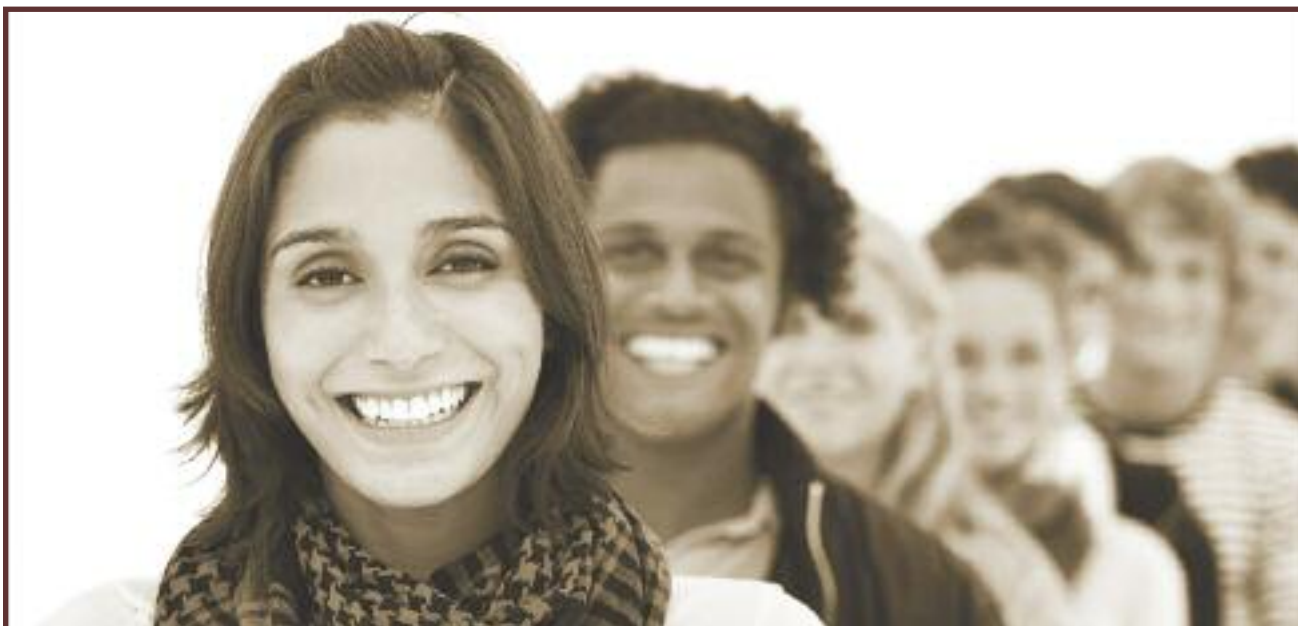
Such was the case when Reedy called the family of a 30-year-old infusion patient to arrange for the retrieval of a pump she was no longer using. "We had been having trouble reaching this patient and her caregivers, despite a number of attempts. Cindy was making yet another try for us," recalls Garst. Reedy eventually tried the mother, who was listed as a backup contact, and learned that the patient had unexpectedly passed away.

"When Cindy asked how her daughter was doing, the mother immediately broke down on the phone," recalls Garst. Admirably, she remained calm, and was able to find out what happened.

"She stayed on the phone with the mother for over 20 minutes, offering condolences and words of comfort," he continues. "As I sat in my office, I was thinking I was so glad I didn't have to handle that call—that has to be one of the

hardest situations to walk into." Not only was Reedy able to complete the call and get the pump back, but she was able to be a genuine comfort to the mother in her time of bereavement.

For everything she does for patients and for the betterment of her organization, Garst insists that Reedy is an exceptional employee—and a role model. "She truly is an asset to Advanced Infusion Services." ■



Who's working "behind-the-scenes" to make your organization great?

Alternate-site infusion providers are on a continuous journey towards achieving excellence. A path of quality care, paved with many examples of leadership and commitment—some highly visible, some not as readily apparent (but, nonetheless, deeply rooted and vitally important). Beyond the unmistakable center-stage roles played by home infusion pharmacists and nurses within our field, perhaps the most unexpected treasures for us all to discover and explore can be found in the stories of the skilled employees who work behind the scenes to make a home infusion company successful—the devoted "faces behind-the-scenes."

Share your stories and help us celebrate—and learn from—the unsung heroes of the alternate-site infusion community.

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