The hospitals have also reaped the expected benefits of the program. Baystate and Tufts have seen declines in readmissions for congestive heart failure (a diagnosis targeted with the interviews and improvement efforts) of 30% and 50% respectively since joining STAAR.

The interviews do point out the limitations of any hospital's ability to reduce admissions, however, according to Ms. Stark. She described the case of a patient who gives the right answer to every question in the readmission review—she sees her primary care doctor and specialist, takes her medication, follows her diet—yet still keeps coming back to the hospital. “We can’t get in their heads,” Ms. Stark said. Some patients may not disclose the issues that led to readmission, even when asked, while others may return for reasons beyond their own and their clinicians’ control.

Hospitals also vary in their level of participation, Dr. Boutwell noted. While some facilities have large, frequently meeting cross-continuum teams and ongoing interviewing of readmitted patients, others have created teams out of providers who were already affiliated with the hospital. “It absolutely spans the spectrum from checking off the recommendations and taking a modest step forward, to some teams have taken this and it’s flourishing in ways we would never have imagined,” she said.

The STAAR leaders would like to imagine that their efforts will lead to improvements even in hospitals that are not currently participating. The materials, including the worksheets used for the readmission reviews, are available for free at www.ihi.org/staar.

“We’re hoping that as a result of sharing the early successful approaches of this demonstration project, other hospitals will take from what we’re doing and use it if it’s helpful to them,” Dr. Boutwell said. “We want nothing more than to see all hospitals in the U.S. commit to improving transitions by focusing on caring for patients across settings and over time.”

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**Worksheet B: Interviews with Patients, Family Members, and Care Team Members**

If possible, conduct the interviews on the same patients from the chart review. Use a separate worksheet for each interview.

**Ask Patients and Families:**

How do you think you became sick enough to come back to the hospital?

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Did you see your doctor or the doctor’s nurse in the office before you came back to the hospital?

Yes [ ] If yes, which doctor (PCP or specialist) did you see?

No [ ] If no, why not?

Describe any difficulties you had to get an appointment or getting to that office visit.

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Has anything gotten in the way of your taking your medicines?

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How do you take your medicines and set up your pills each day?

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Describe your typical meals since you got home.

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**Ask Care Team Members:**

What do you think caused this patient to be readmitted?

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After talking to the provider and the care team about why they think the patient was readmitted, write a brief story about the patient’s circumstances that contributed to the readmission:

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This standardized worksheet is used by hospitals partaking in the STAAR initiative to guide interviews with patients, family members and other care team members.