



Providing interim trauma program leadership to ensure trauma designation



Peregrine Health Services, LLC partnered with Wellstar North Fulton Hospital to help guide staff to a successful trauma center reverification

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Wellstar North Fulton Hospital is a 218-bed hospital in Roswell, Georgia serving North Fulton County, as well as Cherokee, Cobb, Forsyth and Gwinnett counties. Part of the eight hospital Wellstar Health System, Wellstar North Fulton is a Level II Trauma Center offering 24-hour emergency services, obstetrical services, intensive care, coronary care and other outpatient services.

Wellstar North Fulton's Level II Trauma Center ACS reverification had been postponed from 2021 for several reasons and review could not be delayed further. Hospital administrators understood that due to staffing and process issues they would need assistance to meet the deadline. An Interim Trauma Program Manager from Peregrine stepped in to quickly assess the situation and help ensure success. As a result, Wellstar North Fulton passed the site survey with flying colors. In fact, the ACS reviewer made note of the effort. "In an exceedingly brief period of time, the Interim TPM masterfully prepared the trauma site visit."

Who/Where

Wellstar North Fulton Hospital
Roswell, Georgia, USA

Challenge

To assist Wellstar North Fulton in preparing for a rapidly approaching American College of Surgeons (ACS) trauma center reverification and in establishing strong trauma center operational processes moving forward.

Solution

Peregrine provided an Interim Trauma Program Manager (TPM) to Wellstar North Fulton eight weeks prior to the June 2022 ACS site visit. The Interim TPM's task was to make certain all facets of the hospital's trauma center program were ready for a successful review.

Results

Wellstar North Fulton Hospital received reverification with no criterion deficiencies for the first time since becoming an ACS verified trauma center. A strategic plan was also drafted and implemented to optimize the trauma center in three key areas: ACS opportunities for improvement, daily operations, and transition to ACS 2022 standards.

Establishing a pathway to success



Wellstar North Fulton Hospital engaged with Peregrine to prepare for an upcoming ACS reverification, review trauma center processes, policies and procedures, identify areas for improvement, and support change initiatives to put the Level II Trauma Center on a solid path forward.

Hit the ground running

The Wellstar North Fulton trauma program experienced unplanned vacancies in three key roles, including the Trauma Program Manager (TPM), Trauma Performance Improvement Coordinator (TPI) (two positions), and Injury Prevention Coordinator (IPC). Responsibility for the program had been shifted to the Director of Quality and Patient Safety.

With just eight weeks to the ACS reverification review, time was short. The pre-review questionnaire (PRQ) was due in four weeks and was incomplete. Immediately upon arrival the Interim TPM from Peregrine started collaborating with the trauma medical director and began to solicit the data required to satisfy the PRQ. Dozens of datapoints from every aspect of the trauma center's operation were needed. Once complete, the 50+ page document necessitated review and approval from all participating departments.

By nurturing relationships among all relevant participants, the Interim TPM was able to acquire the necessary information and submit the PRQ on time.

Sample of data required in PRQ

- Surgeon credentials
- Trauma activations
- Specialty descriptions
- Operating room detail
- ED/ICU/PACU detail
- Lab & Blood Bank info
- Trauma registry
- PIPS program
- Outreach/education programs
- Injury prevention
- Solid organ procurement

On the heels of the PRQ came another extensive set of documentation required for submission prior to the survey – policies, meeting minutes, rosters/schedules, job descriptions, and more, along with 64 charts of trauma center patient records from which the reviewers would randomly choose 24 for closer scrutiny.

Upon satisfactory completion of the pre-site survey obligations, the technological logistics of what would be a virtual site survey were also vetted and passed on to the ACS.

In June 2022, Wellstar North Fulton Hospital's Level II Trauma Center passed their ACS review and for the first time in their history received no criterion deficiencies.



Next Steps

Once the ACS reverification milestone was passed, the Peregrine Interim TPM turned their efforts to defining performance improvement measures that would keep the trauma center on a strong footing. The clinical care was excellent, however there was a need to improve the documentation of the PI processes. The next significant element was development of a strategic and operational plan. Three distinct areas were considered:

- Address each opportunity identified by the ACS
- Determine, operationally, what would be necessary to maintain trauma center designation
- Account for major revisions in ACS trauma center standards published in 2022

Additional ACS recommendations regarding staffing (MD, APP, surgeons), nursing education, and geriatric program continue to be addressed.

Operational considerations for optimal performance

A thorough assessment of trauma center practices, processes, and policies was conducted, which then resulted in suggestions and recommendations for performance improvement initiatives.

- **Establishing a collaborative organizational structure** – The Wellstar Health System's Trauma Program was reorganized in February 2022. Peregrine consultants (Interim TPM and managing partner) worked to help define the new roles of a system-wide Trauma Program Director (TPD) and Trauma Medical Director (TMD) who would have oversight of the six trauma centers across the eight-hospital system and also be included in the local reporting structure. This matrix approach was meant to offer a consistency of process throughout the system. The Wellstar North Fulton TPM would then report to the hospital COO and to the system TPD.
- **Improving trauma care in the emergency department** – The ED was identified as having opportunity for improvement in the care of the trauma patient. The Interim TPM worked with ED leadership on the following recommendations and activities:
 - Emergency nurses should have TNCC and trauma bay orientation
 - Trauma bay equipment and supplies must be checked every shift and identified needs should be evaluated and acted on in a timely manner
 - Leadership counseling and mentoring of staff as necessary
 - Radio report checklist was created to activate the correct level of trauma team response
- **Emphasizing leadership in the Blood Bank and Lab** – Execution of the Massive Transfusion Protocol (MTP), a low frequency but high-risk activity, was identified as an opportunity for improvement due to delays in blood bank notification. The Interim TPM collaborated with Blood Bank leadership to implement a review of every trauma-related MTP which resulted in process changes to ensure timeliness of blood product availability.



- **Putting 'quality' data to work** – Wellstar North Fulton had been involved with the ACS Trauma Quality Improvement Program (TQIP) for years. TQIP is a nation-wide evidenced-based database that collects data from more than 875 trauma centers. The program uses risk-adjusted benchmarking to provide hospitals with accurate national comparisons. It can identify 'institutional characteristics' to help improve patient outcomes.

Wellstar North Fulton identified an opportunity to leverage the report findings in their PI processes. Failure to use TQIP reports to drive change is a common problem, one that can be quickly remedied to provide essential value. The newly hired Trauma PI Coordinator was tasked with leading the review of the TQIP report and incorporating the findings into the PI process.

- **Clarifying the financial position** – It was suggested that the trauma center could benefit from regular financial reporting including revenue and expenses. Expenditure requests were handled on a case-by-case basis without the ability to reflect against a formal annual budget. The trauma program lacked a specific cost center to manage expenses. Service line budgeting would allow for consideration of new FTE's, such as additional physician assistants to support on-duty surgeons.
- **Strengthening outreach** – Wellstar North Fulton's services must be clearly visible to the community. Recommendations included:
 - Reinforcing ties with referring hospitals through surgeon visits and presentation of case studies
 - Closer collaboration with EMS for clarity on policies and procedures
 - Injury prevention programs for the general public
- **Defining a positive culture** – By reinforcing a positive culture in the trauma center, staff would be more efficient and improve outcomes. Valuing a culture of safety and accountability leads to a common commitment to professionalism.

"It has been an absolute pleasure having Peregrine as part of our team. We appreciate their contributions, support, and excellent leadership."

Mariana V. Gattegno, MPH, CPHQ
Director, Quality and Patient Safety
Wellstar North Fulton Hospital



A focus on new ACS trauma center standards

Due to the fact that Wellstar North Fulton Hospital's reverification had been delayed, they were reviewed under the 2014 ACS standards. However, to be prepared for their subsequent reverification, a closer look at the new 2022 ACS standards was required. The Interim TPM worked closely with trauma center staff to identify nearly 30 different policies and procedures that were new or needed updating. Each was documented and recommendations for adherence detailed.

Highlights:

2022 ACS standard	Recommendation
Operating room must be staffed and available within 15 minutes	Address staff and procedure schedules to meet the volume and avoid diversions.
Establish a geriatric trauma care program	Develop PI plan for geriatric trauma using TQIP data. Add practitioner that represents geriatric population. Develop geriatric trauma guidelines and provide education to staff.
Establish a pediatric trauma care plan	Review the National Pediatric Readiness Survey to use as guideline to prepare the trauma center for caring for children as required by the ACS.
ICU nurse/patient ratio 1:1 or 1:2	Increase nurse coverage in high-acuity situations.
Prehospital feedback	Define a standard methodology to determine what went well with EMS care and what did not. Initiate follow-up for performance improvement.

Prepared for the future

Peregrine was able to quickly step in to assist in an urgent situation. They provided expert leadership to the Wellstar North Fulton Level II Trauma Center in its effort to prepare for ACS reverification. A successful site survey (with no criterion deficiencies) was followed by a comprehensive review of all aspects of trauma center operations. Recommendations for performance improvement have put the center on track to maintain and sustain a critical level of patient care.

About Peregrine Health Services, LLC

Peregrine is a specialized consulting firm that is dedicated to helping healthcare organizations optimize emergency department and trauma center performance. Our consultants are nationally recognized, highly experienced nurse leaders that identify process improvement recommendations and provide hands-on implementation support to help unlock our client's potential.

For more information, visit www.peregrinehs.com.