

CLINICAL CORNER

Heart Failure Treatment Fundamentals: Target Weight

Note: The MaineHealth ACO has made reducing heart failure admissions a priority for 2018, aligning with the MaineHealth system's specific clinical goal of reducing such admissions by five percent by the end of September, 2018. The concept of "target weight," addressed below in an article by MaineHealth Cardiovascular Service Line Manager Richard Veilleux, is an important one to consider as a potential strategy leading to heart failure admissions reduction.

While MaineHealth has worked hard to reduce heart failure (HF) hospitalizations in recent years, there is still much we can do to improve care and increase wellness of HF patients.

Heart failure patients who maintain the right fluid volume have better quality of life and live longer.^{1,2} We have adopted the term Target Weight to help communicate about fluid volume in HF.

Key Concepts:

- **Target Weight = right fluid volume.**
 - It is also the weight at which the patient is stable on appropriate medications.
- **Four pounds from Target Weight = time for patient to take action.**
 - Assertive management of diuretics at this point can head off symptoms and get patient back to their Target Weight
- **Target Weight provides a necessary reference point**
 - for the patient to manage self-care
 - for care team to manage care and communicate across visits, across providers & across settings

One of the most important things we can do is to use **Target Weight** consistently as a fundamental element in the management of HF. While there is widespread acceptance that sudden weight gain is an indicator of fluid retention and increased risk of poor outcomes, we do not communicate consistently about weight, neither with our colleagues nor with our patients. In the past we have used a variety of terms to mean more or less the same thing, but not exactly the same thing: "goal weight", "dry weight", "ideal weight", "baseline weight", and more. This is confusing for health care professionals and even more confusing for patients.

Target Weight tells us the weight to aim for. Just as a target can move, Target Weight should be adjusted when there are changes to a person's body mass or other conditions not related to fluid

status. Consistently communicating and using “Target Weight” will support effective communication with patients and with health care team members.

What do we want to accomplish?

Patient Goals: Every person with heart failure

- 1) knows their Target Weight
- 2) understands what Target Weight means and
- 3) is prepared to take action if their weight is four pounds above or below Target Weight

Care Team Goals: Everyone on the team caring for HF patients

- 1) understands what Target Weight means
- 2) is prepared to educate patients about Target Weight
- 3) uses Target Weight consistently in support of patient’s care plan, including
 - A) documenting and
 - B) communicating Target Weight across care settings

How to determine Target Weight

Target Weight can be estimated in most patients by physical exam and with a couple of questions:

- 1) Is the patient stable on appropriate medications?
- 2) Is there no (or baseline) edema, dyspnea, rales, orthopnea, and usual energy level?

Resources

The *Healing Hearts* Guide

The MaineHealth *Healing Hearts* Guide is a patient and family education booklet to support self-care for optimal health outcomes. It is designed to help communicate Target Weight, to document

patient's Target Weight and to reinforce actions to take when a patient is four pounds above or below Target Weight.

To get tools to support care of heart failure patients, including use of Target Weight, please send an email to MHCVSL@MaineHealth.org.

A new web page is being developed to provide easy access to the suite of MaineHealth tools and resources, including the Healing Hearts Guide, clinical pathways, guidelines, guidance on Target Weight in EPIC, and other tools. In the meantime to request any of these tools please email MHCVSL@MaineHealth.org.

You can also find some of these MaineHealth heart failure resources on the current MaineHealth cardiovascular webpage for providers at MaineHealth.org/hf.

References

1. Androne, et al. American Journal of Cardiology 15 May 2004, Pages 1254–1259
2. Chomsky et al. JLHT August 1997 16(8):846-853