



2020: Year of Patient Experience

Executive Summary

August 27, 2020 Webinar

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Vice President Quality and Safety, Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association

- The VHHA Board has declared 2020 The Year of Patient Experience. The goals of the initiative are to:
 - ~ Identify: Identify, highlight and celebrate efforts by Virginia hospitals and health systems to improve the patient experience of care.
 - ~ Integrate: Continue to link and integrate patient experience improvement efforts with broader quality and patient safety improvement efforts.
 - ~ Connect: Facilitate connections between Virginia hospitals and health systems and other stakeholders for the purpose of shared learning.
 - ~ Improve: Support efforts to improve Virginia hospitals' individual and aggregate performance on national patient experience measures.

Employee Engagement, Patient Experience, and Cake

Nathan Cunningham, Manager, Patient Experience, Dept. of Patient Centered Services, VCU Health

The Relationship between Employee Engagement and Patient Experience

- The relationship between employee engagement and patient experience has evolved from a “chicken or the egg” conversation into the understanding of a symbiotic relationship. Yet, there is still a belief in the industry that successful improvement initiatives must focus on one or the other. It is possible to design an improvement initiative that simultaneously improves both; to have the cake and eat it too.
- Patient experience initiatives that emphasize consistent repetitive patient interactions can have the benefit of managing patient expectations and alleviating anxiety but also can result in restricting autonomy of team members. The loss of personal autonomy and lack of inclusion in the decision-making process can lead to disengaged staff, resulting in lowered retention rates, decreased trust in organizational leadership, and impaired critical thinking.
- The healthcare industry has recognized that leaders making decisions do not have the same perspective as patients and are addressing this gap. Through surveys, focus groups, Patient Family Advisory Councils, and other avenues, patients now have a greater impact on healthcare than ever before, which has improved quality, safety and service. Yet healthcare organizations fail to follow this same shared decision-making principle with team members.

VCU's Approach to Simultaneous Improvement in Engagement and Patient Experience

- The key to simultaneous improvement in engagement and patient experience is implementing team member-driven strategies and shared decision-making. VCU reinforces a sense of workplace pride while simultaneously harnessing the internal motivating factor(s) that originally brought their team members to the healthcare field. The most engaged team members organize their talents, passion, and efforts to become active stakeholders in the advancement of the organization's mission. These groups of team members are now actively participating in shared decision-making across the highest levels of our organization.
- A renovation of a physical therapy clinic waiting lobby is what inspired the development of front line team member shared decision-making processes. VCU replaced chairs with new softer, more comfortable seating, but after a few months noticed a slight uptick in safety events. After an investigation involving front line staff, VCU found that because the new chairs were 8 inches lower to the ground, patients with lower extremity physical therapy appointments were having a difficult time getting out of the chairs safely. Front line team members are able to identify patient suffering and process deficiencies in far more detail than any data set.
- VCU trialed the new shared decision-making strategy with a Patient Access Registration (PAR) team at one of its outpatient locations where engagement scores were below the organizational average, and CG-CAHPS Office Staff Quality metrics had plateaued in the 40th percentile range. PARs have a unique role in patient experience because they provide the first and last interaction of each visit. PAR leaders were pulled together to create initiatives targeted at improving patient experience.
- After 4 months of working with the group and implementing several changes they recommended, VCU was not seeing any data improvement and team members were frustrated with the new work because they perceived these initiatives as still coming from a top-down approach via their leaders. None of the previously implemented initiatives were actual front-line team member ideas, they were all evidence-based best practices.
- VCU implemented a rigorous standardized approach to involving front line team members in shared decision-making. Each PAR leader received root cause analysis 5-Why training and performed a standardized focus group with their team to solicit ideas for how to improve patient experience or employee engagement. VCU aggregated all of the focus group ideas, and selected a PAR-designed monthly curriculum to enhance team member communications and engagement through conversation and role-playing. The program resulted in significant improvement in patient experience metrics, as well as improved engagement. The initiatives were no longer perceived as burdensome by the front line teams that created them. As a result, VCU effectively transitioned all patient experience and team member engagement initiatives from leader-driven to peer-driven design development through shared decision-making.
- VCU also promoted work place pride and enhanced recognition, specifically encouraging peer-to-peer recognition with the PAR teams, instead of top down recognition. VCU digitized all recognition so submissions could be seen health system wide and introduced random drawings to reward not only those being recognized, but also those submitting the recognition. VCU also reshaped Friday

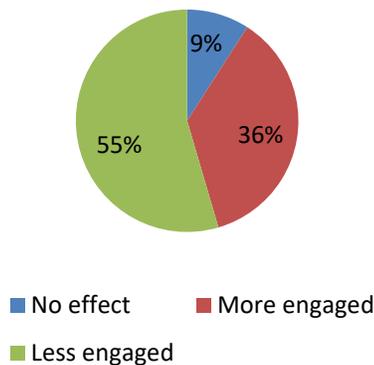
meeting agenda templates to open with a “Gratitude Moment” --- used in health system daily calls, department huddles, and meetings.

- PAR turnover rates in the participating area steeply dropped. VCU attributes this to improved efforts to instill workplace pride by getting better about sharing VCU “wins” through dedicated space on the intranet homepage banner to include health system awards and accolades and a monthly newsletter with accolades for managers to review with team members.
- Patient Experience and Employee Engagement are not independent pathways to success. Shared decision-making gives front line teams the opportunity to create, shine, and shape their working culture into what they need, not what leaders think they need. Through shared decision-making, front line teams are able to simultaneously improve employee engagement and patient experience.

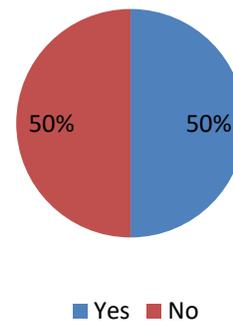
Carrie Brady, VHHA Patient Experience and HCAHPS Advisor

- The Year of Patient Experience is grounded on four foundational elements: leadership, patient and family engagement, staff engagement, and effective use of data. In January, VHHA members identified staff engagement as the foundational area in need of the most support. The presentation does an excellent job of demonstrating the link between staff engagement and patient experience.
- Healthcare organizations report varied effects of the pandemic on staff engagement in patient experience. Of the 22 webinar participants who responded to the poll, 55% indicated staff are less engaged in patient experience, 36% are more engaged, and 9% do not see any effect.
- Front line staff often report that hospitals work best during a crisis. Asking staff to identify what is working well during COVID and/or what should be Always Events® for engagement may provide a roadmap for the future. Of the 22 webinar participants who responded to the survey, half indicated that they have specifically asked front line staff to provide feedback on what has worked especially well during the pandemic. VHHA is interested in gathering information about what is working well to engage staff. If you have a practice you'd like to share with your peers, please contact Abraham Segres at asegres@vhha.com.

**Effect of the Pandemic
on Staff Engagement in Patient Exp**



**Asked Staff What Worked Well
During Pandemic**



Next Webinar: September 24, 2020