Communication Counts – Strategies for Improving Physician Communication & Patient Experience

Communication Counts

Janiece Gray, Founding Partner DTA Associates, Inc.
Patient #1
MN Landscape

Pressures

Self-proclaimed authors

Patients & Survey Burden
• Traversing the trajectory
  – “Don’t Shoot!”
  – “My patients are different”
  – “Show me the data!”
  – “Tell me what my patients say”
  – “Fine, just tell me what to do!”
North Memorial Medical Center

- Level I trauma care facility in Minneapolis
- Average daily Census = 240
- 70,000 annual ED visits
- Large Medicare Population
- Full spectrum of care excluding transplants

NMMC is well known for Trauma, Stroke, Cardiac, Orthopedic and community care.
We have to keep developing our capabilities and avoid falling behind.

- Dr. Atul Gawande, The New Yorker, October 2011
Keys to Success – Physician Coaching

• Partnering with physicians who want to participate
  – Those who self-select are more engaged and ready to hear, understand, and make lasting changes to improve their current practice

• Present option to the entire group – allow physicians to sign-up
  – Rarely does every member of the group elect to participate
Overview of Cohorts 1-3

• 23 providers were shadowed between February – October, 2013

• 150+ patient-provider interactions were observed

• After each observation, the coach and provider debriefed on personal strengths and opportunities

• Each provider was sent an evaluation form as well as their own written report

• This written report is kept confidential between the coach and the physician

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Feedback from Participants

What did you like best about the physician coaching session?

• “Thanks for the feedback. It’s always nice to have fresh eyes.”

• “I thought it was helpful to have someone observe and make suggestions on my communication style. Any input is helpful.”

What changes have you made in your daily interaction with patients as a result of the coaching?

• “Washing hands on a regular basis.”

• “I sit down more.”
Other Key Strategies

• **2-to-Dos**
  – Short newsletters, focused topics regarding key communication tips

• **Data at the physician group level**
  – Shared at Med Exec meetings

• **Projecting the patient voice**
  – Thank-you notes to physicians named positively in patient surveys
  – Start meetings with patient comments

• **“Leadership Engagement Experience: A Day of Education for Physician Leaders”**
  – Centered on patient experience, physician communication and quality

• **Care Boards & Cards**
  – Placed in the physician’s lounge
  – Tips and examples of what to write
  – Photo business cards

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Results

North Memorial Medical Center improved 10x+ the national rate

North Memorial Annual improvement 2012 – 2014 = 3.24% Top Box

HCAHPS Database improvement 9 month reporting period = .12% Top Box
Patient Survey Comments

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Tips

1. Don’t get stuck in “analysis paralysis”
   – Applies to data
   – Applies to improvement strategies

   • But, ask the patients *first*
     – What are they already telling you
       • Comments
       • Complaints
       • Conversations

     – What can they tell you
       • Advisory councils
       • Focus groups
Don’t Chase Your Tail

HCAHPS Composite Unadjusted Ratings - All Service Lines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HCAHPS Composite</th>
<th>Your % Top Box (Unadjusted)</th>
<th>Avatar DB Percentile</th>
<th>Avatar DB % Top Box**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Rating</td>
<td>66.64</td>
<td>39th</td>
<td>69.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to Recommend</td>
<td>74.36</td>
<td>59th</td>
<td>71.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications with Nurses</td>
<td>78.28</td>
<td>57th</td>
<td>76.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications with Doctors</td>
<td>77.50</td>
<td>34th</td>
<td>60.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. During this hospital stay, how often did doctors treat you with courtesy and respect?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Items</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Your Unadjusted Percent</th>
<th>Avatar Database Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>11.92</td>
<td>10.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>2204</td>
<td>65.03</td>
<td>66.74</td>
</tr>
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</table>

6. During this hospital stay, how often did doctors listen carefully to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Items</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Your Unadjusted Percent</th>
<th>Avatar Database Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>19.10</td>
<td>16.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>75.26</td>
<td>78.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. During this hospital stay, how often did doctors explain things in a way you could understand?

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<th>Your Unadjusted Percent</th>
<th>Avatar Database Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>22.23</td>
<td>19.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>72.21</td>
<td>75.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
YOUR CARE FROM DOCTORS

During this hospital stay, how often did doctors treat you with courtesy and respect?

1 □ Never
2 □ Sometimes
3 □ Usually
4 □ Always

During this hospital stay, how often did doctors **listen carefully to you?**

1 □ Never
2 □ Sometimes
3 □ Usually
4 □ Always

During this hospital stay, how often did doctors **explain things in a way you could understand?**

1 □ Never
2 □ Sometimes
3 □ Usually
4 □ Always
YOUR CARE FROM DOCTORS

During this hospital stay, how often did doctors treat you with courtesy and respect?

1. Never
2. Sometimes
3. Usually
4. Always

During this hospital stay, how often did doctors listen carefully to you?

1. Never
2. Sometimes
3. Usually
4. Always

During this hospital stay, how often did doctors explain things in a way you could understand?

1. Never
2. Sometimes
3. Usually
4. Always
Tips (con’t).

2. “Focus, focus, focus” or “Few & Furious”
   – Applies to goals
   – Applies to improvement

3. Find your “partners in crime”
   – Physicians
   – Staff
   – Core team to care

• “If at first you don’t succeed...”
  – This will take time
  – Stay the course

4. “Get the word out!”
  – Newsletters
  – Staff meetings
  – Provider meetings
5. Improvement won’t just happen
   – “If it were easy, it’d already be done”
   – Organizations who have achieved success had to do something

• Reward is worth it!
## Spectrum of Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>More</th>
<th>Most</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Projecting the Patient Voice</strong></td>
<td>Sharing comments, awards</td>
<td>Patient &amp; Family Advisory Council</td>
<td>Patients serving on committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data &amp; Reporting</strong></td>
<td>Clinic/site/unit level</td>
<td>Physician level</td>
<td>Enterprise Data Warehouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal Setting &amp; Compensation</strong></td>
<td>Identify areas of focus</td>
<td>Internal scorecard</td>
<td>Tied to physician compensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service Strategy &amp; Training</strong></td>
<td>Discuss at provider meetings</td>
<td>Develop/adopt a service mnemonic, Video vignettes</td>
<td>Service training, CMEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>Newsletters, Cards, Care boards</td>
<td>Care team coaching,</td>
<td>SWAT Teams, Patient Centered Medical Home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resource Investment ($/Time)**
Get Going!

Traversing the trajectory
• “Don’t Shoot!”
• “My patients are different”
• “Show me my data!”
• “Tell me what my patients say!”
• “Fine, just tell me what to do!”

Path to performance
• It takes a Village
• Everyone, everywhere
• Physician level
• Patient comments & councils
• Newsletters, cards, & care boards
• CMEs/training
• Coaching

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Questions?

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