

CASE STUDY

The transparency journey

From concept to launch in six months

UAMS takes transparency from concept to execution in six months

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) in Little Rock is the only academic health-sciences center in the state of Arkansas. UAMS is the state's largest public employer, with more than 10,000 employees—about 600 of which are clinicians—1,400 faculty, and 3,000 students.

UAMS is also a pioneer in the transparency movement. As one of the first academic medical centers in the nation to implement a transparency initiative, they are seeing remarkable results and improved outcomes.

THE CHALLENGE

In today's marketplace, consumers expect transparency—even in healthcare. They want to know everything they can before they make decisions, and they want a voice in their care. Organizations that can provide this information and harness consumer feedback are fostering stronger patient relationships, creating better patient experiences, and ultimately delivering exceptional patient-centered care.

The initial hurdle for any organization is gaining enough internal support to implement change. Working with NRC Health, UAMS went from concept to implementation in just six months—a remarkable feat for an organization so large.

"The risks involved in the project are inherent in anything you do that is new. Surprisingly, there was very little resistance because I think most of us at the university realized that this is a pathway to better patient care," said Christopher Westfall, M.D., UAMS Medical Chief of Staff. "The amount of support that we got for this initiative once it was brought forth was absolutely phenomenal."

Another key element is finding the right partner to help capture patient data. Julie Moretz, Associate Vice Chancellor for Patient- and Family-Centered Care at UAMS, said working with NRC Health has improved the UAMS patient-engagement efforts, given their responsiveness and innovative approaches and solutions not offered by other patient experience vendors.

"Working with NRC Health has led to a whole new level of involvement and engagement with our physicians and staff," she said. "This is something that I think has really taken us to new heights as we continue working with patients and families to improve their experience at UAMS. We are excited about using NRC Health's patient experience survey tool to provide us with important information as we capture our patients' experience, and to ensure we are offering the best in patient care."

THE SOLUTION

The transparency initiative implemented by UAMS involves surveying patients about their care experiences and care providers. That information is then shared not only with physicians, but also with the public through UAMShealth.com, the clinical website for UAMS. The goal is to drive improvement and give patients a voice in the care process.

UAMS has long been a proponent of surveying patients and inviting them to provide both quantitative ratings and qualitative comments about their experiences. This transparency initiative takes that same information, converts it to the consumer-friendly format of star ratings and comment feeds, and posts it on the UAMS website for the public to view. However, ratings are only published after a physician has received at least 30 survey ratings.

"When we rolled this out at UAMS, making sure there was a good representative sample was important to ensure a meaningful evaluation," said Dr. Westfall. By initiating this ratings process and setting a minimum threshold of 30 ratings, UAMS ensures that feedback is truly representative of the quality of care provided by the institution and its clinicians. Only then can the data be used to drive real improvement.

WHY CHOOSE TRANSPARENCY?

For over 35 years, NRC Health has built on its promise to empower customer-centric health. Today, its solutions enable real-time enterprise feedback to move organizations beyond compliance to a new benchmark: measuring what matters most to each patient and healthcare consumer. It's bigger than data. It's human understanding.



10 million+ patient ratings published



310,000+ consumers surveyed annually

BRINGING CLARITY

At NRC Health, we help organizations move from information to insight. We illuminate the critical moments to improve, and leverage your ingenuity and resources to have the greatest impact.

At UAMS, clarity was achieved by using transparency to bring the voice of the patient to life for physicians, administrators, and other patients. This clarity inspired positive changes among physicians and garnered increased preference from patients.

THE RESULTS

"Capturing information directly from patients and families is really important," said Dr. Dan Rahn, Chancellor at UAMS. "We have our own ideas about what represents excellent care and excellent quality and how to meet expectations, but our ideas may not be the same—and often aren't the same—as the desires and expectations of our families and patients. When we get that information directly from them, it helps us improve."

Since implementing this transparency initiative, UAMS physicians have become more aware of their satisfaction ratings and have implemented meaningful changes to how they deliver care in response to the now-public patient feedback.

"Now that we know our patient comments and their ratings are going to be out there for the world to see, I think it makes us more mindful of how we treat patients," said Roxanne Townsend, M.D., CEO of the UAMS Medical Center. "As a leadership team at UAMS, we've been on the patient- and family-centered care track for several years. But I think this transparency project really brings it to the bedside, so the front-line caregivers are much more engaged."

Behavioral changes

UAMS has seen plenty of evidence of change in the organization's culture in response to patient comments and ratings. After reading a comment in which a patient claimed a physician didn't wash his hands before an exam, one doctor has made it a point to always wash his hands in front of patients so there is no doubt it has been done. One office was able to address issues patients were experiencing at the front desk, which were negatively impacting their experience. In addition, many UAMS physicians have changed their communication methods based on patient comments, explaining things that they may have previously assumed were understood, and striving for greater clarity.

Quantifiable Changes

One of the most quickly quantifiable benefits of the NRC Health Transparency solution is its positive impact on search engine performance. Many clients see a rapid jump in their search-engine rankings after implementing the Transparency solution, and UAMS is no exception. Since going live with their ratings and comments powered by NRC Health, the search-engine rankings for UAMS have shown consistent month-over-month improvements. The UAMS website now owns the coveted top spot in Google for over 80 percent of the clinicians with ratings, and that number continues to climb every month.

UAMS has also seen an increase in scores for physician communication on the HCAHPS survey since going live with ratings and comments, which UAMS leadership attributes to this transparency project.

RESPONSE FROM PATIENT

One UAMS physician reports that in a single day, two separate patients told him that reading reviews from other patients helped them make the decision to see him, indicating that patients are doing their homework and finding value in the reviews.

"I believe that in five years, this will be the way that most responsible institutions and physician groups approach patient care."

Christopher Westfall, M.D.

UAMS Medical Director
Surgical Specialties Service Line

80%

of the clinicians with ratings
are powered by NRC Health

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better understand the people they care for and
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1 800 388 4264 | nrchealth.com
1245 Q Street | Lincoln, Nebraska | 68508

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