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This newsletter is designed to inform you about new research and expert opinions in the area of hospital and health system governance, as well as to update you on services and events at The Governance Institute. Please note that you are receiving this newsletter because you are a Governance Institute member or expressed interest at one of our conferences.

Transforming the Healthcare Experience: The Five Imperatives for Sustainable Change

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In an era that challenges healthcare organizations to do more with fewer resources, patient experience is often considered an add-on. However, hospitals and health systems can no longer solely focus on stripping out waste and reducing costs as a growing body of evidence points to human experience as a key driver for improved patient satisfaction, quality, safety, and outcomes. Now that patients have more information about providers and more freedom to choose, it is more important than ever to ensure consistent and seamless healthcare journeys—from the first impression to the last. The five imperatives of this infrastructure include:

1. Align experience with quality and safety strategies.
2. Build a relationship-based culture.
3. Infuse the voice of patients and families into decision making.
4. Map the gaps in efficiency plus empathy.
5. Put science behind the human experience of care.

1. Align Experience with Quality and Safety Strategies

Faced with the need to improve care quality and reduce costs, many health systems have implemented efficiency methodologies such as Lean and Six Sigma. When used effectively, these practices improve patient flow and address quality checklists and safety risks. However, they fail to address some of the greatest barriers to patient care including fragmented communication, broken relationships, unaddressed emotional needs and concerns, and physical barriers to receiving care. These gaps in the human experience are key drivers of sentinel events,[1] low patient engagement, and

poor clinical quality. Studies show patients choose healthcare resources based on personal experience, relationships, and recommendations. Positive patient experience also correlates to quality, safety, and outcomes. Therefore, rather than treating experience improvement as a parallel initiative, progressive organizations align these efforts to reduce initiative fatigue, restore joy to the practice of medicine, and return care teams to purpose. To unify strategies, successful organizations create a single project management hub that builds alignment across experience, process improvement, human resources, and quality and safety initiatives. The establishment of a chief experience officer or similar position allows the organization to exploit synergies and find efficiencies in process improvement, data collection, and methodologies. This centralized structure will help break down silos and enable the creation of unit-level champions, departmental transparency, and proactive development of experience solutions.

2. Build a Relationship-Based Culture

To create an ideal healthcare experience, a focus on building connection and collaboration must be integrated into all aspects of operation—from executive leadership to the frontline. Successful organizations foster a relationship-centered culture in which patients, families, nurses, physicians, and support staff are viewed as valued members of the care team. Organizational culture and communication influence working relationships, staff satisfaction, and quality of care, which have a profound impact on patient safety and trust in a healthcare system. While technology cannot replace human-to-human interactions, it can help restore humanity to healthcare by removing barriers, extending relationships, empowering patients, and creating a sense of connection. Mobile solutions are available to untether care team members from

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[1] Ashish K. Jha et al., "Patients' Perception of Hospital Care in the United States," *The New England Journal of Medicine*, October 30, 2008.

nurses' stations and ensure clinical alerts and alarms are going to the right person at the right time no matter where they are located. Technology can help restore dignity and respect to healthcare. For example, no human being should be incontinent in his or her bed because no one is responsive to the call button at the nurses' station. In turn, nurses should not need to leave the patient's bedside during care delivery to search for supplies or other team members. Care teams work in a mission-critical environment that requires technologies to connect them to each other, information, and patients instantly. Proven solutions include wearable communication devices, integrated call lights, secure texting, real-time care rounding, and alarm management systems.

3. Infuse the Voice of Patients and Families into Decision Making

To strengthen a relationship-based culture and develop processes that support the human experience of care, leaders must keep their finger on the pulse of what patients, families, and employees need. Listening to these voices requires more than simply deploying satisfaction surveys, which only scratch the surface and are often conducted too many days after a patient leaves the care of the hospital or clinic. An optimal healthcare experience for patients and families can start with a "Sacred Moment," whereby a clinician asks a patient about his or her fears, concerns, spiritual needs, and/or expectations—instead of jumping directly to administrative paperwork such as whether the patient has insurance or a living will. Twin Rivers Regional Medical Center in Kennett, Missouri, undertook a design effort to improve patients' first impression in which doctors led the creation of "Sacred Moments on Admission"—a chance for clinical staff to connect with patients; address their immediate physical, emotional, and informational needs; and focus on the plan of care and patients' goals. Together with a "No Excuses Team," Sacred Moments led to a 117 percent increase in patient top-box hospital "Overall Rating" scores and significant improvements in financial performance and physician engagement.[2,3]

4. Map the Gaps in Efficiency Plus Empathy

Instead of focusing solely on cost reduction and efficiency, leading organizations concentrate on understanding the human experience of care and mapping the gaps in efficiency plus empathy. Experience mapping enables hospital leaders and frontline staff to identify barriers in care and provide valuable information about what matters most to patients, their communication preferences and their emotional, spiritual, and physical needs. Using this human-centered approach, multi-disciplinary teams can create the next standards of care, or Always Events®, which are practices or processes that should always occur when patients interact with the healthcare system.[4] After identifying gaps in patient understanding and compliance with hospital discharge instructions, Cullman Regional Medical Center hardwired mobile technology into the discharge process that allows nurses and doctors to record instructions at the patient bedside. After a hospital stay, patients, family members, and caregivers can access the personalized teaching at any time using any phone, computer, or mobile device. As a result of this extended communication, the hospital reported a 15 percent decrease in readmission rates, and a 63 percent increase in patient satisfaction for the discharge communication domains. In 2014, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement recognized the practice of recording discharge instructions as an Always Event.

5. Put the Science behind the Human Experience of Care

According to The Joint Commission, 80 percent of serious medical errors are linked to communication failures during transitions of care.[5] In addition, research from the University of Maryland revealed that communication inefficiencies result in $12 billion in excess costs or lost revenue annually.[6] Therefore, it is essential that organizations transform communication and care coordination to improve healthcare delivery. Successful organizations create a consistent, seamless experience of care from pre-admission to discharge, connecting with primary care physicians, skilled nursing facilities, and other

[2] Kevin B. O'Reilly, "Redesigning the Patient Experience for Safer Care," *American Medical News*, June 24, 2013 (available at www.amednews.com/article/20130624/profession/130629967/4).

[3] M. Bridget Duffy, Kimberly Petty, and Liz Boehm, "Differentiating on Human Experience: How Healthcare Organizations Drive Lasting Loyalty and Growth," Experience Innovation Network, 2014.

[4] See www.ihi.org/Engage/Initiatives/PatientFamilyCenteredCare/Pages/AlwaysEvents.aspx.

[5] The Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare, Hand-off Communications (available at www.centerfortransforminghealthcare.org/projects/detail.aspx?Project=1).

[6] R. Agarwal, D.Z. Sands, J.D. Schneider, "Quantifying the Economic Impact of Communication Inefficiencies in U.S. Hospitals," *Journal of Healthcare Management*, Vol. 55, No. 4, July/August 2010.

healthcare providers. As healthcare organizations implement human-centered care models to reconnect patients and care teams, they will be required to measure their impact on patient safety, satisfaction, and clinical outcomes. Progressive organizations create transparency around data that drives action and further improvement throughout the organization. To accelerate this scientific agenda, research collaboratives in the U.S. and Canada are measuring and sharing proven best practices related to physician communication, patient and family engagement, care team coordination, care transitions, alarm management, staff resiliency, and many other key drivers that create and sustain an ideal healthcare experience. By studying the impact of human-centered practice models in relation to quality, safety, and outcomes, these organizations are positioned to set the next standards of care for the nation.