



## Healthcare Consumers Want Transparency: Is Your Health System Giving It to Them?

*Notes from the 2019 Children's Hospital Association Leadership Conference*

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**N**RC Health, The Governance Institute's parent company, had the privilege of speaking with Children's Hospital of Wisconsin at the 2019 Children's Hospital Association Leadership Conference (CHALC) in Phoenix, Arizona. This exclusive members-only event is a unique opportunity for pediatric health system executives to come together and advance the delivery of children's healthcare.

This article summarizes this year's session on the transformative power of transparency: how it enables consumer choice, earns credibility with providers, and drives system-wide improvements.

### Today's Consumer Demands Transparency

Though transparency is only just now emerging in healthcare, it's ubiquitous outside of the industry. Digital services like Amazon and Uber give their customers every possible data-point before ever asking them to make a purchase. Consumers have rapidly become conditioned to expect a similar experience in other segments of the economy—including healthcare.

Appearing in tandem with the rise of transparency is an elevation in consumers' standards. The

### Key Board Takeaways

Healthcare consumers are increasingly expecting transparency. This is especially the case for pediatric hospitals and health systems, where parents are looking for the highest quality care for their children. Boards should:

- Recognize how far along the organization is on the transparency adoption curve. Try finding patient experience data on your own to see how difficult/easy the experience is for consumers.
- Consider how adopting a culture of transparency would benefit your organization as well as the consumer experience.
- Discuss transparency initiatives with the management team. Find out how these efforts are currently going and what plans are in place to improve transparency in the future.
- Possibly consider designing a pilot. Work with management to designate a department that could benefit from increased transparency. Then find a qualified vendor to furnish a transparency solution and observe results. If it's successful, generalize out to other parts of the organization.

cost-burden of care has shifted significantly toward the patient, and cost-conscious consumers are eager to get the most value for their hard-earned dollars. They're more willing to travel for high-value care; they're also more willing to switch providers if their current one doesn't provide it.

This, more than anything else, is why embracing online transparency is so important. Consumers are actively searching for value in their care, and according to NRC Health's research, one in three of them says that looking at online reviews is where that search begins.

### How Health Systems Make Transparency Work

NRC Health's transparency solution enables health systems to be a part of this search from the beginning, by publishing online ratings and reviews directly on their Web sites.<sup>1</sup> This gives consumers precisely the information they're looking for to guide their care decisions.

<sup>1</sup> For information on NRC Health's Star Ratings solution, see <https://nrchealth.com/platform/star-ratings>.

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## Though transparency is only just now emerging in healthcare, it's ubiquitous outside of the industry.

Ginger Dzick, Manager of Child and Family Experience with Children's Wisconsin, reinforced the value of this information during her presentation at CHALC. She shared how Children's Wisconsin found success in a number of measures by offering transparency to its consumers.<sup>2</sup>

First, NRC Health's transparency solution helped leadership at Children's Wisconsin garner consensus from clinical staff, so they could all work toward service improvement. The result, according to Dzick, has been greater satisfaction among patients and their families.

Average provider ratings rose to 4.8 out of five stars, significantly better than what appears on third-party sites. Even better, the system saw a five-point increase in its NRC

Health Loyalty Index,<sup>3</sup> a composite measure of patients' likelihood to continue their relationship with a healthcare organization.

The solution's effect on Children's Wisconsin's Web traffic also validates transparency as a marketing tactic. Since the system has gone live with transparency, Dzick points out, visits to Children's Wisconsin's provider profiles have increased by 35 percent—and, crucially, appointment bookings have increased by the same proportion.

### Why Transparency? Because Healthcare Is Personal

Of course, the value of transparency isn't just in the numbers. Dzick rounded out her presentation with a personal story of how transparency affected her own family.

A few months ago, she received word that her children's current pediatrician was moving and would

no longer be available to them. She told her two tech-savvy children to go online and select a new provider from among three local clinics in the area. It took her two children less than an hour to come back with two recommendations. When she asked them why they chose those providers, they said, "They look nice and really cool."

Like most parents, Dzick found that explanation somewhat less than satisfying, so she did some extra research and used the online ratings and reviews from prior patients and families to make her final decision. Her experience as a transparency partner, in this case, was very reassuring: Dzick could be certain that the reviews she saw on provider Web sites were all 100 percent verified.

Pointedly, though Dzick is an industry insider, she is also, like all of us, a healthcare consumer. And the process behind her decisions is by no means unique. Every day, millions of consumers turn to online reviews to guide their decisions—even the most important and intimate decisions of their lives. Dzick's stories prove the point, on both personal and professional fronts: transparency is here to stay, and it's crucial for a modern health system's success.

2 To learn more about Children's Wisconsin's story, see NRC Health, "[Star Ratings and Reviews Significantly Improved Provider Online Reputation at a Major Pediatric Hospital.](#)"

3 For details on NRC Health's Loyalty Index, see <https://nrchealth.com/platform/loyalty-index>.

*The Governance Institute thanks Megan Charko, Content Marketing Manager at NRC Health, for contributing this article. She can be reached at [mcharko@nrchealth.com](mailto:mcharko@nrchealth.com).*

