

IT'S ALL ABOUT OUTCOMES . . . OR IS IT?

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These days, it is interesting to read, listen to and observe what is being said and written about health care. Value-Based Purchasing, Accountable Care Organizations, HCAHPS scores – these are terms that saturate the current health care literature. A significant change will begin in 2013: reimbursement will be linked to the patient’s experience.

The term Value-Based Purchasing is becoming a commonly-used term at all levels of health care settings. Value-Based Purchasing refers to reimbursing hospitals and health care systems based on their performance. Linking reimbursement to the patient experience has clearly increased the intensity with which hospital leaders are focusing their efforts on improving their patient satisfaction data by promoting positive outcomes for the patients, families and communities they serve.

There are several initiatives directed toward improving the patient experience, including Lean programs, Six Sigma, rounding, discharge phone calls, and scripting. Clearly some of these methods are having a positive impact on patient care. However, instead of focusing on “what to do,” our clients are also focused on “how to be.” The clients we work with are providing time and space for all employees to reflect on why they are in health care. Through this reflection, employees at all levels in all departments are remembering their purpose and the sacred work they do every day for the patients and families they serve, thus helping to re-inspire and re-engage their minds and hearts. This re-engagement has a direct positive impact on patient and family satisfaction.

Once employees re-connect to their real purpose, their organizations need to provide structure, guidance and encouragement for them to lead. Natural leaders are found at all levels in organizations; when front line staff members engage with their formal leaders and all voices are heard, the patient experience is truly enhanced. Employees who have reconnected with their

purpose and provide care in an empowered structure are transforming their cultures from an attitude of compliance to an attitude of commitment, and the transformation is amazing.

We have clients who achieve the 90th percentile and above in HCAHPS scores, receive quality awards and/or earn Magnet designation and redesignation. However, when we talk to these high-performing executive teams, it is clear that their vision is broader than simply achieving improved outcomes. As a client hospital CEO shared with us at a company retreat, “Your Creative Health Care Management team has brought the soul back into our organization.” When I heard that comment, I reflected that this is the real challenge facing health care executives today.

I recently had the opportunity to talk with the CEO of a Colorado medical center. In our conversation, I was intrigued by her clear, effective leadership style and the executive support she has given to Relationship-Based Care in her organization. She is truly a servant leader who understands the cross-cutting organizational effect Relationship-Based Care has on employee engagement, physician relations, market share, patient experience, patient safety and clinical quality.

Outcomes are important. However, it is the means by which organizations go about achieving the outcomes that will create the most meaningful and healing experience for the patients, families and communities we serve.