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Practices

ACHE 2017: Four tips to improve the patient experience

by Joanne Finnegan | Mar 31, 2017 8:13am



CHICAGO—Dignity Health Medical Foundation had a great marketing message: Hello humankindness.

But that's not the way all of its patients saw it. Like the man who complained that the call center hung up before he could write down the address and directions to a doctor's office. "That's not human kindness. That's not courtesy. That's baloney," the patient said.



"That was the only thing they cared about," said Jasser, who offered a blueprint for improving **patient experiences** during a presentation this week at the American College of Healthcare Executives **2017 Congress** on Healthcare Leadership. At the time, he said, the organization was not patient-centric, had low patient satisfaction scores, low staff morale and high physician turnover.

Jasser worked with Jake Poore, who spent two decades at Disney World in Florida before he became president and CEO of Integrated Loyalty Systems, to change the organization's culture to one that provides patient experiences that earn high marks.

Poore outlined a model that he said uses a "patient-driven, employee-developed culture to drive changes that are in line with the increasingly value-based definition of success in healthcare today." The secret, however, is getting physicians and staff to think it's their idea, he said.

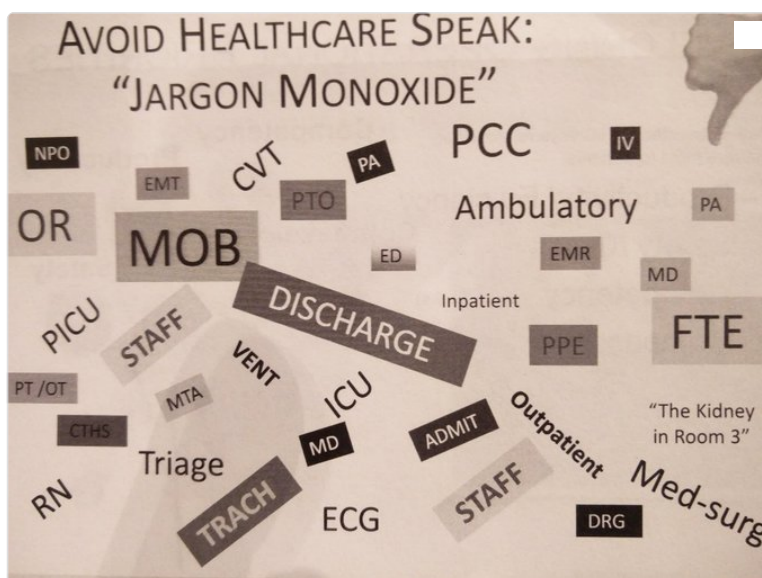
After making changes, Dignity Health saw a 20% jump on patient satisfaction surveys in two years.

Here are some of the techniques that Jasser and Poore suggest other healthcare organizations adopt and adapt to improve patient experience:

Put the human touch back in healthcare. Make sure your culture encourages kindness and compassion. For instance, does a security guard congratulate a new uncle who has come to visit a baby at a hospital or demand his identification? Are doctors rushed or do they come into the exam room and sit down? They suggest doctors sit at a lower level than the patient. Make sure doctors and staff address patients by the name they prefer. Staff should wear name tags that patients can see.

Recognize that patient experience doesn't end with the physician. For instance, you need to get billing staff on board with your patient experience efforts since they spend time on the phone with patients answering questions.

Don't speak to patients using medical terms that are foreign to them. Eliminate all the healthcare jargon and acronyms that just confuse patients.



Saugy Chakraborty

@saugyc

Get rid of "jargon monoxide" @jakepoore @jasonawolf A small step to a better #PatientExperience #ACHE2017

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Work toward consistency. The ultimate goal is to have a playbook everyone follows. Should staff knock before entering the exam room? Are computers positioned so doctors can look at the patient? You also want to train new employees. That can prevent the ebb and flow of patient satisfaction scores.

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