



Doctors at work in a surgical suite at Nationwide Children's Hospital. Photo by Dan Smith

Improving Perioperative Performance

Careful consulting helps a hospital strengthen surgical infrastructure and increase accountability to create sustainable performance improvement.

NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, a 350-bed facility in Columbus, OH, had made impressive performance gains through internal initiatives to improve delivery of surgical services. However, hospital leaders knew that strengthening relationships in their

perioperative community would increase physician, staff and patient/family satisfaction and take them to the next level of operational and financial performance. Therefore, when Nationwide Children's undertook a perioperative performance improvement project with Stockamp, a Huron Consulting Group Practice, creating ways to foster a more collaborative work environment was a priority.

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Over eight months, Nationwide Children's and Stockamp engaged surgeons, anesthesiologists and perioperative staff to focus on four primary goals:

Operational excellence — Improve access to and delivery of surgical services by increasing consistency, collaboration and communication among care providers

Quality enhancement — Improve care and service quality through better coordination across the perioperative service continuum and provide more timely access to resources

Growth in key relationships — Establish a collaborative, performance-oriented culture to increase physician, staff and patient/family satisfaction and support permanent and lasting change

Financial improvement — Increase the number of children receiving surgical care and enhance the bottom line by improving operational performance

To achieve these goals, Stockamp and Nationwide Children's first strengthened the hospital's service delivery infrastructure by redesigning work processes to improve their effectiveness. New workflow tools and training enabled perioperative staff and physicians to measure performance and provided weekly reporting at the facility, service and individual physician levels. These changes helped create a work culture that values monitoring and continuous improvement of operational performance and quality patient care.

Key outcomes of the engagement included:

- 7 percent increase in operating room volume, enabling the hospital to care for nearly 1,000 additional patients annually
- 15 percent improvement in "prime time" operating room utilization on weekdays between 7:30 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- \$5.3 million annual bottom line financial improvement
- 30 percent increase in first case, on-time-start performance
- 17 percent reduction in operating room turnaround time
- 10 percent increase in overall supply and instrument accuracy

TOOLS AND DATA IMPROVE RESULTS

Work drivers and performance data help Nationwide Children's organize and prioritize its efforts to ensure staff is working on the right activities at the right time. Staff members now have a better understanding of how long it takes to get a child ready for surgery, thus enabling the hospital to reduce waiting time for children to receive care. Another project outcome was better coordination before surgery; for example, hospital staff initiate contact with families in advance of surgery, as well as the day before surgery, and encourage families to coordinate transportation and other

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needs well ahead of their hospital visits. Performance data also allow staff to analyze the root causes of problems such as delays or cancellations of surgeries (issues that significantly affect patient and family satisfaction) to determine how to prevent them in the future.

BEYOND THE BOTTOM LINE

Most importantly, the project has enabled Nationwide Children's to build deeper, more productive relationships within the perioperative community. Weekly operations meetings give physician and non-physician leaders an opportunity to work together and better understand each other's roles and contributions. The regular meetings also underscore a commitment to accountability across the continuum of perioperative services. Now, instead of assigning blame for problems, staff focus has shifted to identifying and removing obstacles and working together to improve performance.

Decisions and actions are more proactive than reactive and are based on data versus perception. Employees, executives and physicians are empowered to resolve problems and focus on sustaining gains.

As a result, Nationwide Children's has seen increased employee and physician satisfaction, particularly among surgeons. The hospital had originally surveyed surgeons in January 2008, leading to the Stockamp engagement. A new survey of surgeons, conducted in January 2009 after the project concluded, showed the following improvements:

Comparison of Surgeon Satisfaction Survey Results

(Percent Improvement 2008 to 2009)

- 17%** Satisfaction with perioperative leadership

- 13%** Operating room efficiency in accomplishing daily clinical work

- 12%** Satisfaction with pre-admission testing, the pre-operative process and results for review prior to surgery

- 8%** Overall satisfaction with the main operating room

Better working relationships between staff and physicians translated into improved nurse satisfaction as well. Nurses are better resourced and feel more in control of their workday. They can bring forward ideas for improvement, knowing that processes and forums are in place to make change happen.

Comparison of Perioperative Nursing Satisfaction Survey Results

(Percent Improvement 2007 to 2009)

- 25%** Coworker relations

- 16%** Leadership

- 13%** Organizational alignment

- 12%** Employee involvement

- 8%** Quality/customer focus

SUSTAINING AND IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

By fully engaging the perioperative community in making deep and sustainable performance improvements, the hospital made significant gains in delivery of surgical services to the benefit of staff as well as patients and their families. The project also laid the groundwork for Nationwide Children's Hospital to reach even more ambitious levels of performance in the future. ✦

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