

Transforming the Patient Experience:

AN ACADEMIC HEALTH SYSTEM'S JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE

A large academic health system and Huron worked together to build, sustain and expand the organization's journey to transform care and the patient experience.

Challenge

Leaders at one academic health system have been on a multiyear journey to transform care and the patient experience across their care continuum. After years of work, the organization consistently improved all Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) domains. Leaders were seeking a way to sustain those results through the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerate performance outside the inpatient setting to include specialty care departments and the emergency department. Specifically, the team was focused on improving patient safety, quality and overall patient experience.

Approach

Initially, the academic health system and Huron worked together to implement improvements that supported the overall transformation of patient experience within the organization.

Expanding on the success of their work with Huron, the system's leaders sought to standardize training and behaviors to further improve patient experience, patient safety and employee engagement. Improvements began with inpatient care and expanded specialty departments.

As a result of the collaboration, the academic health system was able to:

Results

Sustained **HCAHPS improvements** across all domains

23 percentile points physician engagement improvement

35 percentile points HCAHPS improvement

12 percentile points CGCAHPS improvement

13 percentile points emergency department improvement

Build and sustain excellence in patient experience:

Leadership teams worked with Huron to elevate the patient experience by implementing a framework that aligned goals, behaviors and processes. This framework led to improved results, and the academic health system was able to sustain those results as it continued the transformation journey in other areas of the organization.

Improve emergency department throughput:

Building off the foundation of leader alignment and excellence in patient experience, leaders worked with Huron to achieve specific emergency department (ED) goals focused on throughput improvement and other key ED performance indicators. Tactics such as twice-a-day huddles and the expanded use of their leadership framework helped provide the structure

and reinforcement of behaviors needed to improve quality and safety, all leading to improved overall patient satisfaction.

Despite battling a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders at the organization made the decision to continue pushing forward with improvement initiatives within the ED. Their continued transformation led to improved patient experience, including reduced patient boarding, length of stay and patients left without being seen.

Sustain excellence through ongoing learning:

Huron and the health system introduced different modes of learning to leaders and staff to standardize training, behaviors and processes. Employees were separated into cohorts to receive customized learning experiences that included experiential learning in a virtual setting. The continuous learning program began with nurse leaders and was extended to new hires, potential nursing leaders and executive leaders.

Improve leader alignment: The team leveraged customized rounding to ensure consistency, increase employee engagement and improve the quality of patient encounters. Additionally, regular check-ins — or leader rounding — with employees were used to address inconsistencies and capture opportunities for employee recognition.

Rather than just providing leaders with training on burnout reduction and stress relief strategies, the academic health system's leadership team wanted a more proactive approach to understanding the needs of providers and staff. Utilizing the foundation already set with leader rounding, the health system was able to navigate the second surge of COVID-19 by gaining a clear understanding of employees' job barriers, resilience levels and personal protective equipment (PPE) usage. Data collected allowed the leadership team to respond with urgency — often daily — to evolving employee needs and concerns.

Support and engage physicians: The academic health system and Huron established two physician engagement committees focused on overall provider engagement and consumer experience. Providers were given the opportunity to join an open session to connect with various members of the leadership team to share wins and concerns. The opportunity for dialogue with leadership focused on improving the work environment and removing any barriers to providing quality care.

Navigate the COVID-19 crisis with resilience:

Leveraging the framework that helped the organization throughout its journey to excellence, leaders were able to implement processes to help educate and inform employees about the pandemic. Leadership distributed a daily COVID-19 dashboard and weekly messages that provided the most current policies, procedures and updates.

Additionally, leadership rounded on direct reports, both in person and remotely, to help foster resilience amongst teams. Resilience rounding led by the department of psychiatry helped monitor the mental and physical well-being of the team by providing staff with a safe space to grieve, reflect and receive help. The organization also increased telehealth offerings for the health and safety of patients and providers.

This case study features a leading academic health system that provides access to primary, specialty, tertiary and urgent care, including a Level I trauma center.



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