

Mercy Insights

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WINTER 2015

Enhancing the Patient Experience

PATIENT SATISFACTION has always been a top priority at CHI Mercy Health. But the recently formed Service Excellence Committee is taking a fresh look at how to make the patient experience at the hospital even better.

The committee is made up of about 30 people, including many managers and staff members who work directly with patients. The group also works closely with the Patient and Family Advisory Council to get feedback directly from patients and their loved ones. The co-leaders of the committee, Carla Bata, RN, medical surgical unit manager, and Alana Wendel, RN, emergency room (ER) manager, are excited about the many positive changes that have already come out of the meetings.

Putting Patients First

In just a few short months, the team has identified three best practices for patient satisfaction. “Our goal is to build relationships with our patients and treat them as whole people, rather than simply treating their condition,” says Wendel.

Over the next year, the committee will educate and train all staff in these best practices:

- ▶ **Hello zone.** To make patients and their relatives feel as welcome as possible, staff will greet all hospital visitors they walk by. “The idea is to put patients and family members at ease from the moment they step through the door,” says Wendel. “We want the hospital to feel warm and welcoming, and a greeting or smile from a staff member can make a big difference.”
- ▶ **No Pass Zone.** All employees will assist patients and family members as best they can, even if they are not



assigned to that particular patient. “For example, if I walk by a room with a call light on, even if the person is not my patient, I will poke my head in to see if there’s anything I can do to help,” explains Bata. “And if I can’t, I will get someone who can.”

- ▶ **Managing up.** To help make sure patients know what’s happening during their stay, staff will clarify what the steps in their care are, how much time each step will take and how long they may need to wait. Staff will also introduce patients by name to the next person who will be caring for them and explain that person’s role.

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Jill Rittenhouse, Robin Rasmusson, and Patty Sather keep patients entertained with crafts such as this Christmas glove tree.



Patients
Manuela Cruff
and Dawn Hass



Patty Sather, patient
Manuela Cruff, and
Julie Keller

Swing Bed Nurses Show What Loving Care Is All About

IT ISN'T UNUSUAL to see patients gathering as early as 45 minutes before mealtime in the main dining room at CHI Mercy Health.

Eating well is important when patients are recovering from an illness or surgery. But this group has come for more than the food. Mealtimes are social times, when they meet up with fellow patients who have become friends to swap stories about their day and celebrate their progress.

“They have a lot of fun out there, and it’s good to see,” says Debbie Anderson, director of social and behavioral services for CHI Mercy Health. “It’s a different environment than we’ve had in the past, so I’m very excited.”

Rolling Out the Welcome Mat

That new environment is a result of the hospital’s decision to revitalize its second-floor acute care and swing bed areas. The swing bed program provides skilled nursing care and rehabilitation for patients who no longer need to be hospitalized but are not yet able to care for themselves at home, such as those recovering from major surgery or joint replacement.

Along with new paint in earth tones came new furniture and entertainment centers. The hospital also purchased

several pullout sofa beds for family members who want to stay overnight and did away with visiting hours. Family and friends can now visit patients “any time of the day or night,” Anderson says.

“People want to be at CHI Mercy Health because of the care we provide,” explains Anderson. “But we’re an older facility, and we needed to give it a facelift. We wanted to make the hospital more inviting so patients’ families feel welcome and want to be here.”

Expanding Activities and Being More Social

Refurbishing the acute care and swing bed areas wasn’t the only improvement. The nursing team got busy transforming the swing bed activities program. The goal was to develop more creative and fun activities to keep patients mentally and physically active, while increasing their socialization.

“During rehabilitation the psychosocial aspect is as equally important as the medical side of things, if not more important,” Anderson says. “These patients aren’t ill; they’re here for therapy, often for long periods. If they become depressed, that’s when we start seeing them get sick. But if they’re moving, they’re eating; if they’re eating, they’re healing. It all works together.”



Danielle Arneson from housekeeping and Patty Sather make Halloween fun by dressing up for patients.



Julie Keller and patient Walter Peter

In addition to community dining, other activities include movie and popcorn nights, root beer float days, card games, and arts and crafts. Patty Sather, a certified nursing assistant who has helped expand the swing bed program, says each member of the nursing staff has special interests he or she likes to share with patients. “One plays the piano and sings, one does ‘glamour time’—cutting hair and doing nails. I do chair yoga, and another likes to bake,” she says.

Sharing a Passion for Caring

“I have such a fun job,” Sather notes. “But it’s a group of us, not just one person, making this work. It’s amazing to have this many people in one place who are so enthusiastic about helping patients by doing what they have a passion for.”

Recently Sather and Anderson arranged to have a pizza party for a patient who was being discharged from the hospital. A fellow patient had requested this going away party for her friend. “She was so cute,” Sather says of the honoree. “She said, ‘I can’t believe you’d do this for me. Do you do this for everybody?’”

Becoming Part of the Family

At CHI Mercy Health, nurses often form close bonds with patients and their families. It’s one of the advantages of working in a small community hospital, Sather says. “The wonderful thing about being a facility this size and in a small community is that everyone feels like more than a patient in a hospital. We’re an extension of their home and family.”

Over the years, some patients return to the hospital. But sometimes, Sather says, there is only one chance to make a positive impact and leave a lasting impression.

“I’m a grandma now, and I can relate to that vulnerability people often have when they’re brought into the hospital because they don’t feel well, and they’re not sure what’s going on,” Sather says. “They’re looking for that sweet, special kind of person to just be there, to smile and hold their hand and say, ‘Let’s walk this walk together.’”

“It’s the camaraderie, the friendships the staff have with patients, that makes our work so rewarding,” she adds. “And I feel so blessed.”

See what else we’ve been up to. Visit us online at www.mercyhospitalvalleycity.org/mercy-news-releases.htm.



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Patient Experience *(continued from page 1)*

Creating More Comfortable Stays

The committee is looking at additional ways to improve patients' overall experiences. Some of these suggestions are already in place, while others are in the works. They include:

- ▶ **Less noise.** Rest is an important part of healing, so the staff is making changes to keep hospital floors quiet. This includes posting "Quiet, please" signs in busy areas, making hospital carts less noisy, and limiting overhead paging at all times to make for a more restful stay.
- ▶ **Housekeeping cards.** The housekeeping team now leaves a small card in patients' rooms to let them know when the room has been cleaned. "We've already had a lot of positive feedback about this service," says Bata.
- ▶ **Nightstand notes.** Staff members put paper and pencils at patients' bedsides. This enables patients to jot down any questions for doctors or nurses.
- ▶ **Bedside reporting.** During shift changes, nurses meet in the patient's room to talk about his or her care. "This gives the patient a chance to participate in the discussion and ask questions," says Wendel. "We've started this process in the ER, and patients are really pleased with it."
- ▶ **Follow-up calls.** After patients are discharged from the hospital, a staff member calls to check in within 48 hours. "We make sure they are doing well and ask if they have questions or need any extra help," says Bata.

Improving Patient Satisfaction Scores

So far patients and their families have welcomed these changes. But Bata and Wendel say the true test will be measured by patient satisfaction scores. These surveys are completed over the phone by an independent survey company after patients are discharged.

"Every survey completed is a gift of time from our patients, and we take the results very seriously," says Keith Heuser, president of CHI Mercy Health. "We are focusing on working to always exceed the expectations of our patients and their families."

Let us know about your patient experience. Email info@mercyhospitalvalleycity.org or call 701-845-6400.



Here Comes the Flu Again

UP TO 49,000 Americans die of influenza, or the flu, each year. But you can take steps to avoid becoming a statistic. Here are two strategies that can help protect yourself and your family:

1. Talk with your doctor about flu vaccinations. A shot is still the best defense against the flu, according to health experts. But you may want to consider trying out the nasal vaccine instead of the shot. The nasal spray is approved for healthy people ages 2 to 49 who aren't pregnant.
2. Follow these simple hygiene practices to help prevent the flu—and teach your children to do so, as well:
 - ▶ Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
 - ▶ Cover your nose and mouth if you sneeze or cough.
 - ▶ Touch your eyes, nose, and mouth as little as possible.



Mercy HealthCare Foundation

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The Mission of Catholic Health Initiatives is to nurture the healing ministry of the Church, supported by education and research. Fidelity to the Gospel urges us to emphasize human dignity and social justice as we create healthy communities.



CHI Mercy Health's Core Values

- **Reverence**—Profound respect and awe for all of creation, the foundation that shapes spirituality, our relationships with others and our journey to God
- **Integrity**—Moral wholeness, soundness, fidelity, trust, truthfulness in all we do
- **Compassion**—Solidarity with one another, capacity to enter into another's joy and sorrow
- **Excellence**—Preeminent performance, becoming the benchmark, putting forth our personal and professional best

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Established in 1985, the Mercy HealthCare Foundation has played a critical role in the Mission and Ministry of CHI Mercy Health, which has been serving the health care needs of Barnes County for nearly 100 years. Today's challenging health care environment places an increased emphasis on the importance of our community's philanthropic support.

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