

Gain without Pain: Improving Patient Safety, Patient Care and Employee Satisfaction through Appreciative Inquiry

Case Study: Newark Beth Israel Medical Center

Background

Newark Beth Israel Medical Center (NBIMC) is a 673-bed teaching hospital based in Newark, N.J. with over 80,000 emergency department (ED) visits per year; over 60% of patients are admitted from the ED.

Challenge

A report released in 1999 by the Institute of Medicine revealed that as many as 98,000 Americans die each year and one million are injured due to preventable medical errors. This report and others like it reinforced the need for better patient safety systems. Each time a patient moves from one environment to another, there is risk that essential information regarding care will not accurately be communicated. To increase patient safety, the staff at NBIMC wanted to change their handoff process from the ED to the A6 inpatient telemetry unit and chose to work with Michael Feinson and Bernard Mohr to implement this change.

Solution

The consultants and NBIMC teams decided to totally innovate their handoff process using an approach called Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI works by acknowledging problems and engaging groups in studying what causes moments of exceptional performance. When people come together to identify something going well (i.e. perfect handoffs, exceptional patient care), they become enthusiastic, create new knowledge and are motivated to implement change.

This process at NBIMC involved a series of dialogues, innovation development, goal setting and self-organizing implementation activities, such as having nurses from the ED interview nurses from the telemetry unit and vice versa to share best practices. The leadership team studied data from all the activities and implemented tangible changes for the “handoff process,” including a new safety assessment, a welcome script, low risk cardiac transport protocol and a standardized transfer report.

Results

Results were seen almost immediately. Within the first six months, or less, these were the results:

- 9.3% improvement in nurse satisfaction and teamwork.
- 10.2% improvement in patient satisfaction.
- Increased rates of patient assessment (11% increase in nutritional assessments; 70% increase in skin assessments).
- 9.2% improvements in compliance with cardiac enzyme regime.
- 81.8% improvement in medication administration records.
- 60% increase in the number of patients able to be transported without a cardiac monitor – with a cost savings of 67.5 hours of nursing time saved per month.

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