

## The evolution of patient service



### Why improving the patient experience requires new perspectives

Though patient-experience excellence is more important than ever, it is still just as elusive. Pleasing patients and their families has always been important, but new pressures and incentives make getting it “right” even more critical. From reimbursement changes to new competition for patients, who are asserting themselves more and more in health care decisions, virtually every hospital executive lists patient experience as a priority. Yet, despite massive investments in patient experience initiatives in recent years, the consumer satisfaction index for hospitals has risen just 0.3 percent per year on average. Simply put, new approaches must be found.

### **Leaders and staff already know why service excellence is a must**

The reasons for focusing on service excellence range from the idealistic — a belief that it’s “the right thing to do” — to the pragmatic — a recognition that service quality impacts margins, market share and staff morale, among other important metrics.

### Hospital-wide perspectives on patient experience as a priority

- **Physician:** “The organization [must be] known for delivering exceptional care and service to all of its patients at every contact point, from receptionist, nurse, physician, phlebotomist, physical therapist, x-ray technician, security guard, to volunteer.”
- **Chief nursing officer:** “It is a core value and part of the fiber of this organization.”
- **Nurse manager:** “Putting patients at the center of everything creates an environment for evidenced-based practice where nurses feel they can do the right thing for service, safety and clinical quality.”
- **Hospital president:** “No hospital, no physician and no executive wants to be average when it comes to the care of patients.”
- **Corporate service manager:** “It helps the organization achieve overall excellence.”
- **Director of guest relations:** “It’s the right thing to do.”

#### And the kitchen sink, too

“The return on investment is amazing. I really believe that if you make this a strategic initiative, there is a huge amount of payoff. If you attend to the whole service experience, there’s less risk of malpractice, staff morale is better, our patients’ families remain more loyal and it helps with our market share and philanthropy too. You name it, there is a reason to invest in this. There’s huge payoff.”

Manager, children’s hospital

### Striking links to clinical quality add further urgency.

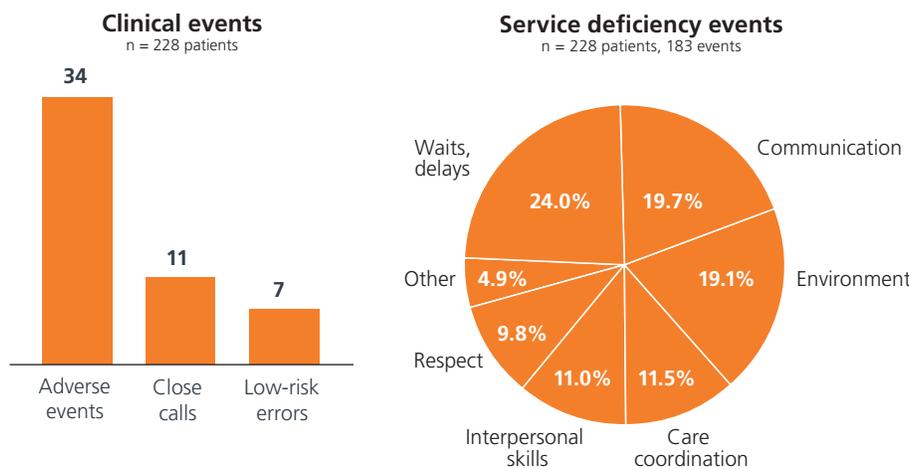
Value-based purchasing has created new financial incentives for service excellence, driving significant executive attention to patient satisfaction. Recent studies suggest correlations between clinical quality and service, as well, meaning service is more central to your organization’s mission than you may realize.

21%

of hospitalized patients studied experienced at least one adverse event, close call or low-risk error ...

2.5x

... while patients who experienced service deficiencies were two and a half times more likely to experience a clinical event<sup>1</sup>.



1. Beeson M, "Practicing Excellence: A Physician's Manual to Exceptional Healthcare," Gulf Breeze, FL: Studer Group, 2006; Talent Development research and analysis.

### If excellence is the bar, who sets it?

Providers can employ a number of methods to gain insight into how patients define their experience and what matters to them. For example, convening patient panels, undergoing simulated patient experiences, shadowing patients and questioning patient focus groups all provide insights into the patient experience. By enabling providers to discuss service issues in the moment with individual patients and their families, daily rounding has proven to be the most comprehensive, effective approach to getting actionable feedback.



#### Daily rounding

- Leaders interview patients and family members during the service experience
- Surfaces individual patients' unmet needs and provides data to identify broader trends and opportunities for improvement

#### Patient panels

- Patients invited to tell stories of their experience (both positive and negative) to caregivers

#### Patient experience simulations

- Staff participate in experiential exercise that simulates uncomfortable and alienating patient experiences

#### Patient shadowing

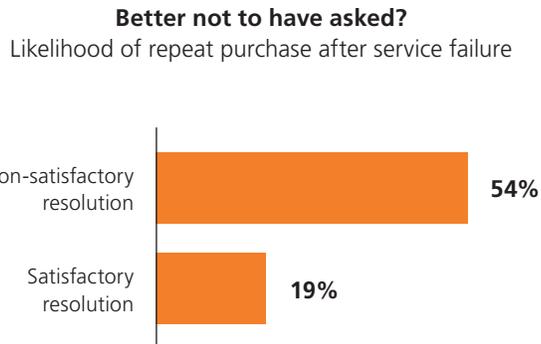
- Staff observe communication and service efforts
- Gives opportunity to view patient experience and provide feedback to caregivers

#### Patient focus groups and interviews

- Patients gather to discuss service issues
- Staff gain insight into patients' shared understanding of service experience

**By asking, but not acting, hospitals may make things worse.**

Asking patients about their experience during their stay drives higher levels of patient satisfaction. However, identifying patient issues and failing to resolve those issues actually makes patients more dissatisfied than they were before being asked. A lack of cross-department service coordination and follow-up are common causes of suboptimal patient experience outcomes.



**The service recovery paradox**

The “service recovery paradox” states that with a highly effective service recovery, a service or product failure offers a chance to achieve higher satisfaction ratings from customers than if the failure had never happened. A little bit less academically, this means that a good recovery can turn angry and frustrated customers into loyal customers. In fact, it can create even more good will than if things had gone smoothly in the first place.

Customer experience academy

**Evolving patient experience requires a closed-loop system**

To date, patient experience improvement efforts have primarily consisted of various episodic initiatives that respond to items identified in patient surveys or focus groups. Unfortunately, any gains achieved tend to fall off when the next campaign begins. Providers must instead design a care experience that anticipates and reacts to patient needs throughout the care experience, uses real-time data to “close the loop” on patient needs, and creates actionable intelligence that enables executives to continually and systematically improve the experience for all patients.

**The evolved model of patient service**

**Managing improvement initiatives**

- Actionable intelligence for better decision making
- Visibility into effectiveness of improvement efforts

**Real-time “pulse” on patient experience**

- Capture data in the moment versus 6–8 weeks post-discharge
- Survey patients on the true drivers of satisfaction

**Surfacing improvement opportunities**

- Problem units or systemic issues highlighted
- Benchmark performance within a peer network



**House-wide accountability**

- Closed-loop service recovery system
- Ownership and engagement at staff level

## Organizations using this new model are achieving nation-leading performance.

### Case study in brief: Key Health, Mountain Region<sup>2</sup>

- A two-hospital region that is part of a larger system
- Key Health had attempted to implement nurse leader rounding, but compliance was low and results did not improve
- This region was experiencing downward-trending HCAHPS scores
- Developed a closed-loop system leveraging iRound technology in 2011

“iRound for Patient Experience gives our leadership team real-time visibility on all aspects of the patient experience. It brings a whole new level of accountability to our hospitals: we can understand exactly how patients are feeling about their experience every day, make sure that service recovery issues get resolved, and ensure that staff stay motivated and deliver on their goal to continually improve the patient experience. This improves both our top and bottom lines.”

EVP at Key Health

### Evolving toward a closed-loop system for patient experience at Key Health

#### Enabled executive-level visibility

- Dashboards show real-time service scores across all current patients
- Drill-downs show performance at the unit and service department levels
- Automated daily and weekly reports

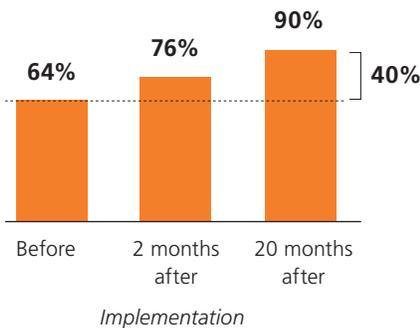
#### Hardwired service recovery process

- Easy documentation and prioritization of service requests
- Closed-loop communication with service departments
- House-wide transparency on service

#### Facilitated data-driven decision making

- Trends surfaced in key areas affecting performance
- Correlation revealed between HCAHPS and service recovery trends
- Continuous root cause analysis on issues

### National ranking: Patients rating hospital ≥9 out of 10



2. Pseudonym.

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**For more information about how iRound** enables staff to conduct patient satisfaction rounds directly on mobile devices and provides the analytics needed for in-depth analysis, service recovery and systematic performance improvement:



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