



A COMMITMENT TO CARE

How to deliver a superior
patient experience

A WHITE PAPER FROM THE HEALTHCARE EXPERTS AT





How to deliver a superior patient experience

**How do your patients feel about the care you provide?
If your patients were to share their perceptions of your
healthcare organization, what would they say?**

Patients, of course, do share stories about their health-care experiences. They tell their family how they were treated during a hospital stay. They offer an opinion when a co-worker is looking for a new physician. Or they share with friends their story of being referred to a specialist and what the experience was like. How your organization is represented in patient stories depends on the overall patient experience you deliver.



How to deliver a superior patient experience

Today, patients have more information at their disposal to help them select a healthcare provider or care facility. They are empowered to make choices about where they want to go for care. A provider's ability to deliver an outstanding patient experience impacts its ability to retain and gain patients. That is one of the reasons patient experience is something that a lot of healthcare organizations have on their radar. However, while many want to create a better patient experience, most (with the exception of a few industry leaders) are still trying to understand exactly how to do that.

It is easy to think of brands that exemplify customer experience success – brands with a “wow” factor that leave you wanting more. Disney is one of them. Disney World is known for being the happiest place on earth. Why? Because at Disney World every single visitor is treated to a personalized and carefully-orchestrated experience that is designed to incite happiness. Of course there are some obvious differences between Disney and healthcare organizations, their missions, and what they aim to provide customers. Healthcare organizations, for example, might focus more on safety than making patients deliriously happy. But there are lessons to learn from Disney and other brands that have masterfully designed customer experiences.

Recognizing when a brand or a healthcare organization has successfully created a positive customer experience is simple. Achieving a superior experience level in your own organization is more difficult. This whitepaper aims to share ways you can bring patient experience into focus and impact how patients perceive your organization.

The patient experience concept is often misunderstood in the healthcare industry. Many people have a tendency to confuse “patient experience” and “patient satisfaction.” They either use the two interchangeably or incorrectly. Unfortunately, this leads to a lot of organizations ticking the patient experience box when they aren't



The meaning of patient experience

Patient experience is the sum of all interactions, shaped by an organization's culture, that influence patient perceptions across the continuum of care. One of the really important points this definition makes is that patient experience is shaped by an organization's culture. It starts inside – with leadership.

actually giving attention to the whole patient experience. It is important to realize that patient satisfaction and patient experience are not the same thing.

The Beryl Institute offers a helpful definition of patient experience that states: Patient experience is the sum of all interactions, shaped by an organization's culture, that influence patient perceptions across the continuum of care. One of the really important points this definition makes is that patient experience is shaped by an organization's culture. It starts inside – with leadership.

Also, as this definition points out, patient experience goes beyond whether or not a patient was satisfied with a particular instance of care. A patient that had blood drawn for a lab test might say the procedure was satisfactory because the staff was pleasant and the blood

draw was completed in one attempt. While it is all well and good that the patient was not dissatisfied, this single instance does not define the entire patient experience. Patient experience is about the overall perception and emotional connection patients feel. It is what creates loyalty and turns patients into ambassadors for your healthcare organization. It is larger than one moment of care.

A final point to emphasize about Beryl's patient experience definition is that it uses the word "perceptions." Patients generally are not familiar with care quality measures. They don't typically know if protocols were followed or whether evidence-based practices were used. What they do know is how they feel about the people (and place) administering treatment. This means that a big part of what defines your organization's patient experience is patient perception.



Designing your organization's patient experience

A number of healthcare organizations have emerged as leaders in the area of patient experience. By looking to them for inspiration you can learn what is working for other hospitals, physicians, nursing homes, and get inspiration for your own organization.

If your organization is committed to designing and delivering a superior patient experience there are several things you can do. Below are some suggestions on where to start.

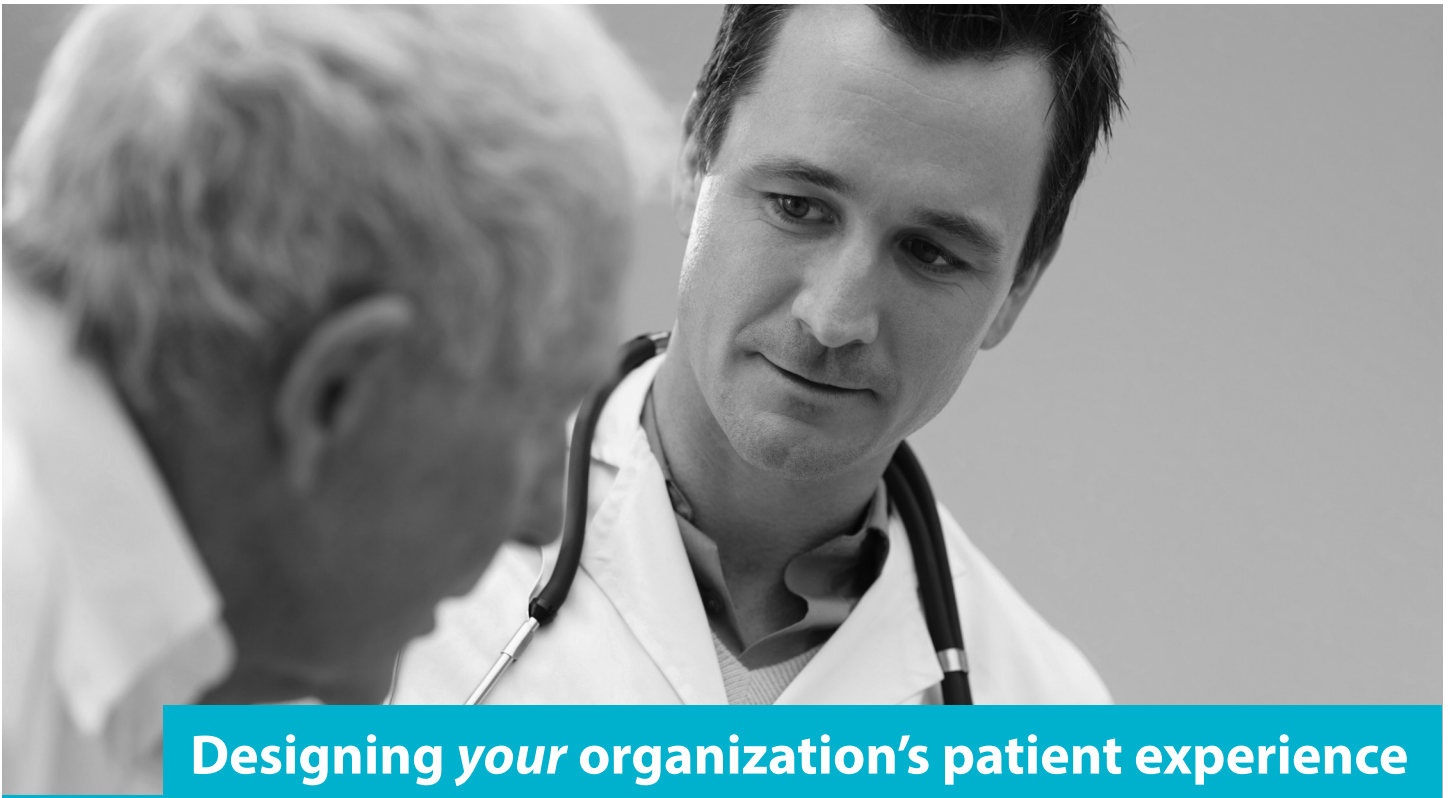
Tune In To What Others Are Doing.

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For example, Sharp HealthCare in San Diego is notorious for being among the best when it comes to patient experience. That didn't happen by chance. Sharp succeeded at improving its patient experience by focusing on the organization's culture. It made a resolution to be not only the best place to receive care, but also the best place to work and to practice medicine. It implemented cultural changes – at every level of the organization – that engaged employees and got them to buy into the mission. An annual all-staff event has become one of Sharp's most successful employee engagement efforts. By completely committing to improving the organization's culture, Sharp has been able to get

employees on board and drive behaviors that have improved the patient experience.

Another example of an organization that is getting patient experience right is The Cleveland Clinic. The Clinic has always been known for medical excellence, but at one point it also earned a reputation for delivering a poor patient experience. To change that, The Cleveland Clinic created an Office of Patient Experience and appointed a Chief Experience Officer. This was the first step toward improvement. However, The Clinic was initially uncertain about what it needed to do to improve its patient experience. So it conducted research, commissioned studies, surveyed patients, and did everything possible to learn about patient needs. Through this research The Clinic learned that the superficial efforts it had been making to improve the patient experience – like bettering food options and redesigning hospital gowns – were not aligned with patient needs. So



Designing your organization's patient experience

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it made changes (based on its research) to better address patient needs. Now, in patient experience terms, The Clinic ranks in the top 8% of hospitals according to CMS rankings.

Sharp Healthcare and The Cleveland Clinic are just two examples of organizations doing innovative

things in the patient experience arena. Many others, like Penn Medicine and The Martin O'Neil Cancer Center to name a few, can offer inspiration in this area as well. The point is, taking time to learn about what leading patient experience-focused healthcare organizations are doing can give direction to your efforts.

Define Your Focus

Inspiration from outside organizations is helpful, but you also need to look within your own organization and ask, "What do we want to be known for?" Look at your mission statement or core values and consider what it is that you want to fuel your efforts. Sharp Healthcare adopted seven pillars of excellence that serve as the foundation for its patient experience work: quality, safety, service, people, finance, growth and community. Identify your organization's priorities so you have something to direct your efforts.

Once you have your driving principles in mind, evaluate your current patient experience efforts. Look at patient surveys – really dive into them and closely analyze what patients are telling you. Compare the real experiences patients report via survey results with the goals you identified and the ideal patient experience you are trying to create. Look for shortcomings and areas where you need to improve.

When The Cleveland Clinic was first working to improve its patient experience, it widely publicized its very dismal CMS patient satisfaction survey results



Designing *your* organization's patient experience

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throughout the entire organization. This was a huge eye-opener and helped employees realize the importance of improving the patient experience.

Another way to evaluate your current efforts is to bring in an impartial outside party to perform a patient experience observation exercise. A patient experience observation involves an unbiased observer assessing different aspects of patient care and reporting on where adjustments are needed and where opportunities for improvement exist. This is extremely helpful for identifying problems that are unrecognizable to those closest to the problem. Outside observers can offer a perspective that is very close to what a first-time patient experiences.

Your research, observation, and analysis should leave you with a pretty clear idea of what patients want and need from your organization beyond clinical care. If you haven't been able to identify

where you need to make improvements, you either need to continue to do research or call in an outside consultant for help.

When you have identified where adjustments are needed you are ready to make plans for incorporating patient experience improvements into clinical care routines. There is one important thing to understand as you create experience-driven processes and define patient experience in terms of actual job duties: You must address patient experience responsibilities for ALL employees within your organization. This means physicians and janitors, nurses and executives, billing personnel and marketing team members. Every single person in your organization impacts patient experience. Therefore, the actions of all employees need to contribute in a positive way to the patient experience. So work to develop new processes and make improvements across all parts of your organization.



Best practices for physicians

Drive Improvement From The Top

Employee buy-in is essential to creating stand-out experiences. Think about the Disney example again. The experience at Disney World is what it is because every employee actively contributes something to it. From the people dressed in character costumes, to those selling Mickey Mouse ears, everyone is committed to Disney's mission. Achieving this level of buy-in takes inspiring leadership. In healthcare organizations, it is essential that top-level leaders motivate and encourage employees to buy into patient experience efforts.

Several top hospitals and health systems that have successfully increased their patient experience focus have implemented executive rounds. This is where executive staff members make daily or weekly rounds, talk to patients and staff, and get feedback on what is going on and how things could be made better. Executive Rounds keep leaders involved and demonstrate C-level support. When these visits are followed by actions and improvements staff members know their voices are being heard. This builds respect and cooperation.

Another way to support patient experience efforts from the top is through staffing. A Vocera

Communications survey of more than 100 senior healthcare executives found that even though respondents claimed patient experience was a top priority, staffing breakdowns at their organizations did not support this – there were few positions dedicated to patient experience improvement. Ideally every organization should assign the responsibility of monitoring and managing patient experience efforts to a dedicated individual or team. For large hospitals or healthcare systems this might mean hiring a Chief Experience Officer. Smaller organizations or practices that don't have the luxury of making additional hires have to be more creative and reassign job roles and responsibilities to cover patient experience management. The important thing is that healthcare leaders ensure staffing aligns with priorities.

Healthcare institutions that are known for delivering an excellent patient experience typically have several things in common: they understand patient needs, they target efforts toward those needs, they drive efforts from the top and involve all employees, and they embed patient experience into every facet of their organization. By learning to do these things you can positively influence patients' perceptions of your healthcare organization.



Primaris is a healthcare consulting firm that works with hospitals, physicians and nursing homes to drive better health outcomes, improved patient experiences and reduced costs. We take healthcare data and translate it into actionable quality improvement processes that create the foundation for highly reliable healthcare organizations.

Primaris has more than 30 years of experience advising healthcare organizations on how to improve quality, patient safety and clinical outcomes. Contact us to learn more.

To learn more about Primaris and how we can help you improve patient experiences and reduce costs, visit our website at www.primaris.org, or call toll-free at 1.800.735.6776.



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