

Putting Patients First:

Improving Hospitals to Improve Care

Patient satisfaction, in addition to being tied to Medicare reimbursements, may also strongly correlate to healthcare outcomes. Following the “customer first” examples of America’s leading companies, hospitals are adopting the idea of putting the people they serve at the forefront. The result is hospitals that have not only improved their quality of care, but become models of service themselves.

Why Patient Satisfaction Matters

77% of high performing hospitals reported that their commitment to patient care was a key reason for their success.¹

30% of hospitals’ Medicare reimbursement is based on Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) scores.²

The Affordable Care Act withholds 1% of total Medicare reimbursements - approximately \$850 million - from hospitals. Only hospitals that meet certain care standards and have high patient satisfaction scores will earn that money back (that percentage will double in 2017).³

The “Customer First” Approach Across the Spectrum

The “patient first” approach is modeled after the “customer first” approach employed by successful companies. This approach emphasizes a “chain of excellence” from management to employee and the collection of testimonials and evaluations of its service.⁴

In their book “Be Our Guests,” the Disney Institute details their “customer first” approach, which includes training employees to identify and fulfill the needs of disabled guests without invasive questions. The park has a 70% return rate for first-time visitors.⁵

Amazon, which continually ranks high in customer surveys, takes a proactive approach and seeks to learn from customer behavior and problems through data gathering.⁶

Online shoe retailer Zappos encourages and empowers their staff to place the customer first. They are graded not on call volume but customer experience. 75% of their purchases come from repeat customers.⁷

Patient First Initiatives in Action



One of the Cleveland Clinic’s “patients first” initiatives is training to increase cultural competence for patient care. The hospital earned the 2016 AHA Equity of Care Award recognizing their efforts to reduce healthcare disparities.⁸



Yale New Haven Hospital uses feedback software and tablets to gauge and boost patient satisfaction in real-time. Patients rate staff friendliness, responsiveness, and room cleanliness, and may also tap a button to send an immediate request for housekeeping.⁹



The Doctors Council SEIU and NYC Health and Hospitals, the largest public hospital system in the nation, have created a system-wide joint labor-management committee aimed at improving the quality of healthcare through understanding the care experience from the patient’s view.¹⁰