

WHA Creates Patient and Family-Centered Care and Engagement Advisory Committee

Quality improvement activities are enhanced when the patient's voice is incorporated into the design and implementation of processes that impact the patient experience. The Wisconsin Hospital Association Partners for Patients program and hospitals across Wisconsin recognize the important role that patients and families can have in improving the patient care experience. That is why WHA has created the Patient and Family-Centered Care and Engagement Advisory Committee.

How patients and their families experience care has important lessons and learnings for health care providers. The WHA Patient and Family-Centered Care and Engagement Advisory Committee is focused on creating resources that will help hospitals not only bring the patient and family into their organizations as improvement partners, but will help facilitate sharing best practices, an attribute that has helped Wisconsin improve quality faster than nearly any other state.

Health professionals and patient advisors from Bellin Health System, Gundersen Health System, UW Health, Aspirus, and Froedtert and The Medical College of Wisconsin are key contributors to the WHA advisory committee. These organizations have dedicated the time and resources to help spread and advance patient and family-centered care and engagement, not only in their service areas, but throughout the state. Together, the committee set and is committed to the following aim:

Pool the existing resources within the state of Wisconsin to develop a strategy and structure for facilitating the spread of patient and family-centered care and engagement through education, collaboration, training and dedication.

UW Health is pleased to be a partner in the new initiative.

"After more than ten years of working toward a culture of patient- and family-centered care at UW Health, we can attest to how critically important the engagement of our patients and families has been to improving clinical outcomes while also enhancing the patient and family experience," said Sandy Salvo, program manager, patient & family-centered care, UW Health. "We have a Patient and Family Advisor (PFA) Partnership Program that seeks to infuse the voices of our PFAs into all our improvement initiatives, quality and safety decisions, hiring practices, facility designs, workflows and operational priorities. Along with our PFAs, I am excited to join others around Wisconsin to help spread best practices around this critical work of partnering with our patients and their families in meaningful ways."

While this work is not new to WHA, Tom Kaster, WHA quality coordinator and co-chair of the newly-formed advisory committee, says there is still much to learn.

"We realized there was a vast difference in the understanding of the meaning and scope of patient and family engagement throughout the state. We also realized that Wisconsin had some in-state exemplar organizations that have been pioneering patient and family-centered care and engagement for several years," according to Kaster. "But the biggest realization was that to gain traction and drive adoption of patient and family engagement, we need to practice what we preach from a state collaborative standpoint."

By "practice what we preach," Kaster is referring to engaging hospitals and their patients in defining, developing, and improving the delivery and spread of these resources to Wisconsin hospitals. One of the key strategies that is widely recommended for the advancement of patient and family engagement is the development of patient and family advisory councils (PFAC) at each hospital. PFACs are defined as structured groups of patients, family members, staff and physicians that meet regularly to promote improved patient care, enhance the patient experience and provide constructive feedback on strategic initiatives as well as day-to-day operations. *(continued on page 4)*

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"We took the PFAC model and applied it to WHA's patient and family-centered care and engagement initiative. To do this we needed a talented patient advisor co-chair, and Rosie Bartel was a natural fit," said Kaster

Rosie Bartel is a nationally-known patient advocate and Wisconsin native. Five years ago, after knee replacement surgery, Rosie was told she had contracted a Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) infection. After numerous surgeries and hospital stays, Rosie lost her right leg to the infection. In an effort to improve the safety and reliability of care and reduce surgical site infections, Rosie was asked by her hospital to participate in an improvement project. The success of the project branched into other opportunities for Rosie. Since then, she has been a featured patient advocate by IHI and has collaborated with countless other state and national organizations.

Rosie's passion, insights and inspiration have been central to the new WHA advisory committee. "The beauty of this group is that it brings the voices of patients and health care professionals together from across the state. As we work, we are developing templates for patient/family advisor committees. These templates can then be adopted by hospitals and redesigned to fit their needs. The voices of the patients are being honored and respected in this group. What we say is being heard and acted upon. We know what we say matters," Rosie said.

Bellin Health, another of the key contributors to the Advisory Committee, has found patient and family centered-care is essential to their operations.

"We believe and work very hard to make it an engrained part of our culture. Because of this, Bellin has been recognized with the Patient Experience Award from Healthgrades for the fourth consecutive year. We attribute this success to the efforts we have made to engage our patients to be more active partners in their health care. Our patient and family advisors in our Patient Voices Program have also been key to help guide us on this journey," said Kari Barrett, service excellence coordinator, Bellin Health. "Through our work with WHA and the Advisory Committee, we hope to learn, develop and spread best practices of patient and family-centered care and patient engagement throughout our state. In the end, we are all working to improve health care for the entire population of Wisconsin."

Gundersen Health System's experience with patient engagement is not new, but they echo the excitement of the hospitals and health care systems that have signed onto the WHA project.

"Gundersen Health System has had the privilege of engaging patients for many years. With the formation of our Patient and Family Advisory Committee, we now have a structured mechanism to hear patient voices, engage patients and families in policy and program development and improve the care we provide every day," said Ginny Moore, senior consultant, quality administration, Gundersen Health System. "WHA is developing tools and resources to support patient and family engagement, and will share their products with health care organizations in Wisconsin. Gundersen Health System is proud to be a member and an active part of the WHA team."

The WHA Patient and Family-Centered Care and Engagement Advisory Committee has brought together hospital and system leaders, patient advisors and advocates and a large state association (WHA) with one singular goal in mind—to improve the safety and value of care that is delivered to Wisconsin patients and families. Participation in the Committee is open to all WHA members.

"Although we have a lot to accomplish and it is early, I can tell that this is a special group, and I look forward to seeing more hospitals and health systems join us in helping to spread this important information throughout our state," Kaster said.

For more information about the WHA Patient and Family Engagement initiative, contact Tom Kaster at tkaster@wha.org or 608-274-1820.