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Accelerating patient experience performance: Collaboration and engagement as drivers for success

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Abstract

The efforts at Albert Einstein Jewish Hospital in São Paulo, Brazil have been focused on principles of excellence for many years as realized in engagement in and commitment to some of the leading global healthcare practices over the last decade. In reinforcing a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement, the patient experience efforts at Einstein have evolved from an operating structure for patient experience efforts to a truly integrated program for action in address all elements in the organization impacting and ultimately driving patient experience outcomes. By grounded efforts in core evidence-based practice, while engaging the hearts and minds of staff members from all corners of the organization, Einstein has developed a Patient Experience Accelerating Program that not only reinforces the power of collective and collaborative improvement efforts, but also acknowledges the importance of engaging staff, Einstein has been able to drive clear and tangible outcomes.

Keywords

Patient experience, patient engagement, employee engagement, process improvement, collaboration, leadership

Since its foundation, the patient has been always in the center of care at Albert Einstein Jewish Hospital in Brazil. The Customer Service sector has always had an important role in this Institution, being responsible for understanding the patient's needs and for hearing their opinions about the provided care. In 1999, Einstein was the first hospital outside the United States of America to be accredited by the Joint Commission International, emphasizing its focus on quality. In 2005, Einstein precociously adopted the IOM principles: safety, effectiveness, patient-centeredness, timeliness, efficiency and equality. Einstein joined major world campaigns on Patient Safety that were proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and by the Institute for Health Care Improvement (IHI) in 2005, such as the 'Hand Hygiene' and the '100 Thousands Lives' campaigns, for example. In 2009 a Lean-Six-Sigma team was assembled in order to build capacity in the system and disseminate the knowledge through improvement projects, 80 to 100 a year.

In 2011, a Patient Flow Program was implemented, focused on: i) reducing waste in health; ii) optimizing length of stay; iii) improving outcomes and patient satisfaction; and iv) reducing costs. On the same year, Einstein became a designated Planetree hospital, reiterating its focus on the humanization of care. In 2014, the Patient Experience Office was created to lead initiatives in this field. Still in 2014, a strategic partnership with IHI was established, the Triple Aim model was adopted and Clinical Medical Groups, which intends to generate high levels of physician engagement by ceding power to them and other healthcare professionals. Their

focus is on establishing protocols, actions to reduce waste and increase access, ultimately aiming at building the basis for value-based healthcare and the Triple Aim. The Value Management Office, responsible for adopting the best and most updated health outcomes measurement strategies, was created in 2017.

More recently, health institutions leaders understood that the Patient Experience can be an important competitive advantage and it should be seen in a broader perspective, whose values are beyond Patient Satisfaction, specially related to quality, safety, cost-efficiency, services and outcomes. Engaging employees is the key tool for patient and family engagement and one of the critical factors to successfully implement this broader perspective. Considering this scenario, in 2017, Einstein opted for changing the Patient Experience Office into a Patient Experience Accelerating Program. The Einstein Accelerating Programs are based on Kotter's proposal – giving direction to the already existing social networks¹. This is done by aligning their objectives and purposes.

The Patient Experience Accelerating Program helps to break down silos, as it engages professionals from different sectors to work side-by-side with the same objective. It also engages the front-line staff, considering that they are better prepared to give their opinion on patient care, and also identifies and develops new leadership that emerge from these groups. These teams diagnose the situation, identify gaps and propose the necessary improvements, defining measurable goals and periodic monitoring. In consonance with the broader

approach of the Patient Experience, the Einstein's Patient Experience Accelerator Program has seven components:

1. Employee engagement and training
2. Patient and family engagement and education
3. Environments
4. Patient safety and transparency
5. Outcomes
6. Operational efficiency, and
7. Patient safety metrics.

Each of these groups has a leader and an interdisciplinary work team. Periodically, these groups gather to develop improvements and KPIs and report monthly to the Patient Experience Committee which is composed by a group leaders, the Hospital President, CEO and Directors, including the director responsible for the Patient Experience, which brings the senior management to closely follows the improvements and main indicators of Patient Experience of the institution.

Here are some examples of the indicators:

- The Employee Engagement component measures the satisfaction level and the cooperation index among different sectors, having identified innumerable improvement opportunities for patient care, and also establishes and follows training and capacitation goals in Patient Experience and communication skills development courses.
- The Patient and Family Engagement and Education team has turned its attention towards digital patient education strategies.
- In the Patient Safety and Transparency component, besides the monitoring of the main indicators of patient safety, an indicator was established for the 100% realization of patient and family disclosures in the occurrence of catastrophic serious adverse events, ensuring transparency and mitigation of damages.
- The Environment team works with the improvement of environmental conditions for patients and employees. Changes in the layout of the areas were performed based on the diagnoses performed by this group.
- The Outcomes team follows not only traditional clinical outcomes, but also the PROMs – Patient Reported Outcome Measurements and the PREMs – Patient Reported Experience Measurements.

- The Efficiency team monitors the actions adopted by the Patient Flow Accelerator; one of the monitoring indicators is the allocation of the patient in the right specialty ward, with an important impact on the outcome, because patients allocated in the right specialty have an average time of stay 13% lower than those allocated outside the specialty.
- The Metrics component follows up patient satisfaction indicators and the improvements made in the areas, as well as the Patient Advisory Councils, a strategy to listen to patients and invite them to participate in the institutional decision-making process.

The main indicators of the Patient Experience Accelerator comprise the Patient Experience dashboard with 15 indicators that are monitored monthly by the senior management, which provides a clear view of the broader dimension of the patient experience concept. Having adopted the model of an Accelerator in order to improve patient experience promoted even more employee engagement, and helped us to accomplish our real mission, which is having a patient-centered system.

During this journey, it was very important to realize how important it is to take good care of the staff as a direct means to the end of providing excellent care to our patients. As we move now to becoming a high reliability organization, that is of essence, as we do not dissociate experience from safety. By the same token, at Einstein we believe that staff and patient engagement and experience are one and the same.

References

1. Kotter, John P. *Acelere: tenha agilidade estratégica num mundo em constante transformação*. São Paulo: HSM, 2015.