

THE Value Initiative

Members in Action: Improve Quality & Patient Outcomes

Adventist Health Castle – Kailua, Hawaii

Empathy Initiative Improves Outcomes and Workforce Engagement

The AHA's Members in Action series highlights how hospitals and health systems are implementing new value-based strategies to improve health care affordability. This includes work to redesign the delivery system, manage risk and new payment models, improve quality and outcomes, and implement operational solutions.

Overview

Adventist Health Castle's (AHC) Empathy In Action program is a systematic approach to training staff and volunteers on the value of empathy. Using a research-based curriculum, every employee and volunteer is exposed to the impact of empathy through staff orientation and a 90-minute workshop. Empathy In Action seeks to improve patient outcomes, safety and satisfaction as well as enhance employee satisfaction. Equally important, the program is a tangible example of the faith-based organization practicing its mission.

The workshop uses fun, interactive methods to share the research on the power of empathy, teach listening skills and demonstrate empathetic approaches to engaging with patients, families and colleagues. In one activity, called "In Their Shoes," participants are given a scenario and a box of shoes to use in a role-playing exercise to heighten awareness of what it's like to "walk" in another person's shoes.

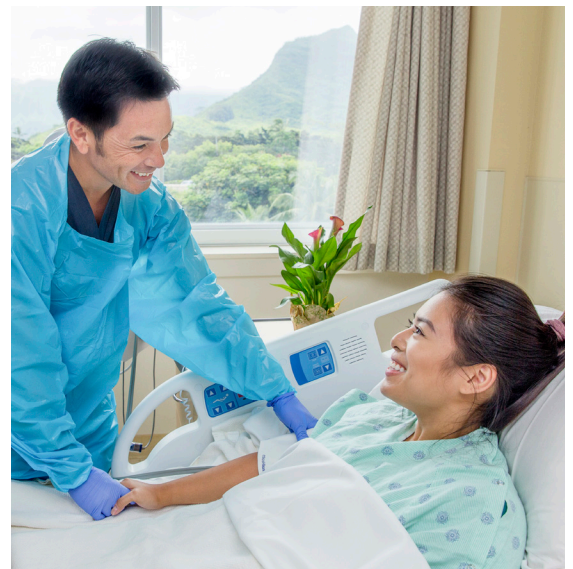
Participants also discuss barriers to being empathetic, such as heavy workloads, burnout and working extra shifts, and share techniques how to overcome obstacles. The aim is for staff to leave the workshop feeling refreshed, rejuvenated and reconnected to their personal mission of caring for others.

To continually reinforce principles of empathy, AHC leaders use internal publications to share recent examples of staff showing compassion, spending extra time with patients and families or listening to others' concerns. The hospital also conducted a friendly competition among departments to exhibit creative examples of empathy. The posters, diagrams and artwork were displayed in high-traffic hallways for the community and staff to see.

Impact

Though it is difficult to separate the impact of the empathy initiative from other simultaneous AHC patient experience projects, since the effort began four years ago, overall patient experience scores have risen to the 97th percentile and associate engagement has risen to the 88th percentile.

In addition, the program's community outreach component resulted in 1,300 volunteer hours and \$63,000 in donated goods and services.



To expand the reach of empathy outside AHC's walls, each department was given \$30 seed money and invited to adopt a community program to engage with, such as schools, parks, beaches, shelters or community agencies.

Lessons Learned

A critical success factor for AHC was using a research-based foundation to build the program, said Steve Bovey, quality supervisor. He also said the workshops are effective because they combine humor and fun with skill-building activities.



"People who work at Castle have a deep sense of making meaningful contributions to our patients and the community," said Bovey. "There's a sense that what they do each day is important, and that contributes to their job satisfaction and resiliency."

Future Goals

In addition to offering the program to staff and volunteers, AHC is identifying a physician champion to expand the initiative to the medical staff.

"We want them to reconnect with the joy of medicine by demonstrating how empathy could be a wonder drug for their patients and an antidote for physician burnout," Bovey stated.

Contact: Steve Bovey, Quality Supervisor

Telephone: (808) 263-5121

Email: Boveysr@ah.org