OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION: Henry Ford Health System in Detroit, Michigan, implemented a three-year Healthcare Equity Campaign designed to raise awareness of healthcare disparities; to implement culturally appropriate tools and resources to address them; and to embed changes into organizational processes and policies so they can be sustained over time.

AIM: To ensure that healthcare equity is understood and practiced by Henry Ford Health System employees.

ACTIONS TAKEN: Workshops, presentations, and discussions were hosted to increase awareness of disparities. A communications plan as well as "Healthcare Equity Ambassadors" supported these efforts. Cross-cultural and cross-literacy communication skills were taught, and language access services were enhanced. Race, ethnicity, and language data collection methods were revised to collect more accurate information.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: Over 300 employees were trained as "Healthcare Equity Ambassadors." Of employees in the System exposed to the Campaign, over 80% reported increased awareness of disparities and over 85% reported involvement in efforts to address them. Equity measures were embedded into quality reports, organizational strategic plans, and other System processes.

BACKGROUND

Healthcare Disparities

Racial and ethnic healthcare disparities have been raised as a national problem for over a decade. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality has reported on healthcare disparities and the nation’s progress in eliminating them since 2003. Despite this attention on a national stage, awareness of this problem and focus on addressing it has not fully trickled down to the public at large, including employees working within large healthcare organizations.

With the policy environment shifting to include stronger provisions for equitable health care, including the measurement of disparities through the collection of self-reported race, ethnicity, and primary language data from patients, it was decided at Henry Ford Health System, to develop an awareness-raising and educational campaign to create an environment where disparities and equity are well-understood by employees, and in which organizational and policy changes to improve cultural competence can be made. HFHS serves the southeast Michigan region, which is rich in diversity (Table 1), giving even more urgency to address racial and ethnic healthcare disparities.

Table 1. Demographics of SE Michigan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race at Admission</th>
<th>Macomb</th>
<th>Oakland</th>
<th>Wayne</th>
<th>Detroit</th>
<th>Highland</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White non-Hispanic</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2010 U.S. Census

Henry Ford Health System

Henry Ford Health System (HFHS) is a non-profit health care organization in the metro Detroit region consisting of 5 hospitals, 29 medical centers, and over 23,000 employees.

Healthcare Equity Campaign

The Healthcare Equity Campaign, launched in 2009, was led by the System’s CEO, Nancy Schlichting, and Vice Presidents for Quality and Equity, Dr. William Conway and Dr. Kimberlydawn Wisdom. The Campaign was organized into three phases:

- The first phase focused on raising awareness among employees about racial and ethnic disparities in health and healthcare.
- The second phase focused on promoting culturally appropriate communication and care.
- The third and final phase focused on integrating changes into system policies and processes so they are sustainable over time.

MEASUREMENT AND DATA

Phase 1: Awareness

A “Campaign to Raise Awareness of Healthcare Disparities” was created to be presented at the System’s annual Quality Expo.

Phase 2: Cultural Competence

An “Equity Award” was created to be presented at the System’s annual Quality Expo.

Phase 3: Sustainability

A performance goal related to diversity and equity was cascaded to all employees from Nancy Schlichting, CEO.

OUTCOMES & LESSONS LEARNED

While awareness of disparities has not yet spread across the entire health system, there is evidence to show that over time, employees will increase their involvement to address disparities in healthcare. The Campaign set as an organizational initiative led the foundation for this work within the health system. Developed a cadre of dedicated employees and leaders, and identified gaps that will be systematically addressed. A more permanent initiative is now being established to carry this work forward.