Montefiore Hutchinson Campus and 1199SEIU Partner to Improve Patients’ Wait Time Experience

BACKGROUND

The Montefiore Hutchinson campus is a state-of-the-art ambulatory healthcare facility, part of the nationally recognized Montefiore Medical Center in Bronx, NY. This 280,000 square-foot campus offers high-quality ambulatory surgery and subspecialty care under one roof and is designed to allow greater provider and staff collaboration, patient-centered care, easier referrals, and joint consultations. To improve the patient’s wait time experience in the Urology Department, 1199SEIU Healthcare Workers East, the largest local union in the nation and Montefiore management stakeholders partnered on a process improvement initiative using PDCA methodology to enhance customer service and staff communication. The project was supported by the Labor Management Project (LMP), a consulting resource funded through collective bargaining that supports collaborative efforts addressing mutual interests.

AIM

To enhance overall wait time experience by providing communication up to 3 times to Urology patients if they wait more than 15 minutes from their scheduled appointment.

STRATEGY

- Trained all Urology union and management staff on Patient Centered Care and customer service communication. (The LMP’s Patient Centered Care program enhances staff awareness and strengthens staff communication skills through adult learner-centered training).
- A five-member multidisciplinary team of clinical and administrative staff led the Urology Department process improvement project and met weekly. The project was co-led by union and management.
- The team educated all department staff, including physicians, about their role in informing patients about delays. Team encouraged and coached staff to communicate with waiting patients, and modeled the behavior themselves.
- Surveyed patients about their waiting room experience. The majority of both first-time and returning patients indicated a desire for periodic updates on their wait time. A second survey determined how often staff communicated about their wait time for delays of over 15 minutes.
- Staff observed patient confusion and frustration when individuals that arrived later were summoned ahead of them (because they were seeing a different physician). Staff implemented a new practice of calling the doctor’s name when summoning patients into exam rooms to eliminate confusion about queueing.

“Providing patient-centered care is vital in all areas within the healthcare system. It should be a focus for all staff who may encounter patients (i.e. from environmental service to medical directors).”
- LMP Patient Centered Care trainer

We realized that, depending on the doctor and on the planned procedure, some patients were waiting longer than others. Patients would get confused and frustrated if someone who arrived after them was called into the exam room before they were called. We decided to include the doctor’s name when we called the patient’s name to the exam room. That helped them understand that the patient sitting next to them might be waiting for a different doctor.”
- LPN and PI team member

RESULTS

- Patients reporting waiting more than 15 minutes declined from 34% to 24%. Over 75% of patients reported waiting less than 15 minutes following project intervention.
- The percentage of surveyed patients who reported being informed about delays two or more times increased from 9% to 23% during the project’s duration.
- Surveyed Urology staff reported an overall improvement in their relationship with patients.

TEAM’S LESSONS LEARNED

- Communication between staff is key
- Teamwork leads to efficient workflow
- Staff bonded on a different level
- Patient feedback is key to capturing their true experience
- Learned that patients want information about procedures; researched material
- Our improvement effort led to decrease in patient wait time