Safety Needs Our Voice - An Innovative Approach to Safety Culture Assessment
MedStar Health

Program/Project Description.
Essential to MedStar’s Good to Great Journey and ‘Patient First’ core value is patient safety. A multidisciplinary planning committee, co-chaired by a Hospital President & Chief Nursing Officer, was charged with coordinating MedStar’s first systemwide administration of the Agency for Healthcare Quality & Research (AHRQ) Survey on Patient Safety Culture. Both the Hospital and Office Practice Surveys were administered to more than 21,000 associates and practicing physicians. Eight MedStar Hospitals and more than 40 ambulatory/office practice sites participated in the survey process. Our ninth hospital administered the AHRQ hospital survey earlier in 2010 as part of a yearly administration process they commenced in 2006. Survey results identified current organizational conditions that can lead to adverse events and/or patient harm and established our corporate safety culture baseline to raise awareness about associates and physicians patient safety related concerns.

Process.
MedStar's first system-wide survey administration kicked-off March 8, 2010 in support of National Patient Safety Awareness Week. To ensure response confidentiality and timely access to results, surveys were administered via a secure electronic platform developed in partnership with a third party vendor (The Patient Safety Group). English and Spanish paper surveys were also available for those with limited or no computer access. Since this was MedStar's first systemwide survey administration our participation goal was set at 60 percent to align with current AHRQ national benchmarks.

Solution.
In an effort to better meet the needs of all senior leaders and quality directors, the survey planning team partnered with our corporate internal communication's department to develop a Survey Implementation Toolkit. The Toolkit is an innovative solution designed to effectively communicate the importance of associate and physician support and helped to establish ‘buzz’ throughout each entity to ensure maximum survey participation. Our survey theme was ‘Safety Needs Our Voice’ and all communication and marketing tools have a look and feel that support & highlight this theme. An electronic and paper copy of the Toolkit was provided to the corporate planning team, hospital/entity senior leaders, quality directors and site survey implementation teams. The Toolkit is also readily accessible to all associates through the MedStar Health intranet home page.

The Toolkit included campaign artwork used to brand the survey and various communication tools to educate and promote the survey to unit/department managers, associates and physicians. Examples of customizable Toolkit items include: promotional flyer, poster, table tent, articles for internal newsletters, email or elevator boards, Leader Cue Card, presentations for use at unit, department and/or Town Hall meetings and a PowerPoint template to communicate survey results.

Measurable Outcomes.
More than 16,000 associates and physicians completed the survey for a 67% participation rate. Our system-level hospital survey results identified Teamwork within Hospital Units (76%) and an Excellent/Very Good (70%) overall patient safety grade as organizational strengths. Opportunities for improvement included: Non-punitive Response to Error (37%), Handoffs & Transitions (37%), Staffing (49%), and Teamwork Across Units (50%). Medical Office results identified Patient Care Tracking & Follow up (78%), Teamwork (84%), Organizational Learning (78%), Overall Perception of Patient Safety & Quality (76%), and Staff Training (75%) as system-level strengths. Work Pressure and Pace (54%) was identified as a system-level opportunity for improvement.

Sustainability.
Survey results were evaluated to identify key system-level patient safety opportunities to focus the development and implementation of our 2011 - 2013 Patient Safety Strategy Plan. To monitor the progress of our Good to Great patient safety journey MedStar will administer the AHRQ Hospital and Office Practice Patient Safety Culture Surveys every two years.
Role of Collaboration and Leadership.
A system-level multidisciplinary team of key stakeholders (Co-chaired by a Hospital President and Chief Nursing Officer) is leading the development and implementation of best practice recommendations and interventions designed to support a fair, just & learning culture and to improve handoffs & transitions. Specific interventions planned for 2011 include: design and implement a system-wide High Reliability Safety Improvement strategy, select and implement a system-wide performance management algorithm/process, and design, rapid-cycle test and implement tools to improve nurse to nurse and physician to physician handoff communication.

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