

Interactive Patient Feedback is Helping Phelps Hospital Set the Bar for Patient, Employee Satisfaction

Using Allen Portal, Phelps Achieves 12% Jump in HCAHPS and 470% Increase in Patient Feedback

How We Did It

Phelps Memorial Hospital sought a way to encourage patient feedback – whether it's a staff compliment or a complaint – before patients are discharged, and while the hospital can address it.

Phelps needed an easy way for bedridden patients to submit comments. It found the solution with Allen's interactive patient engagement system already in use on its bedside touchscreen units. The improvement in patient and staff satisfaction scores has been nothing short of impressive.

Long before Medicare introduced its HCAHPS-tied reimbursement model in 2013, Phelps Memorial Hospital in Sleepy Hollow, New York, had its collective eyes on delivering a great patient experience. But hospital managers will readily admit that patient satisfaction was not always at the level they would have hoped. That is precisely why hospital leadership took a number of steps more than a decade ago to make a positive impact on their patients' experience at the 238-bed, nonprofit acute-care hospital.

"We implemented a culture of kindness initiative about 10 years ago," says Phyllis Vonderheide, RN, senior director patient experience. "Our culture of kindness was not something that was created, like a program. It was simply placing a priority on recognizing the wonderful staff that work here and the frequent comments we received about how kind Phelps team members were. We wanted to recognize individuals who provide exceptional patient care and kindness."

One component of the initiative was a People Star Award, through which patients could recognize hospital staff who delivered great service, using a paper nomination ballot. "Through the People Star Awards Program, we were recognizing in the course of a year maybe 25 employees," says Kerry Pisano, Phelps' vice president of support services. The paper ballots were placed throughout the hospital, but since most patients are stuck in bed for the majority of their hospital stay, participation required a staff

member to bring the paper nomination to them to fill it out.

"Recognizing only 25 employees a year meant we weren't really acknowledging and expressing our appreciation for the good work that the 1,800 other staff here at the hospital do every single day," notes Pisano.

In 2006, Medicare instituted its Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems, or HCAHPS, a 27-question survey for discharged patients designed to be a tool for consumers to compare hospitals. At the start of the 2013 fiscal year, Medicare added pay-for-performance incentives under the Affordable Care Act, tying reimbursement in part to a hospital's HCAHPS survey scores.

"With the advent of HCAHPS and pay for performance, we knew we needed to take that culture of kindness to a new level, and that's how the Journey to Excellence was born," says Vonderheide, who began at Phelps as a bedside nurse 45 years ago and for the past 10 years, has been involved in the service excellence role, helping to shape the patient experience.

The Journey to Excellence is built around Pillars of Excellence, or focus areas, which encompass excellence in people, service, quality and safety, financial performance and growth.

Activities around each pillar are spearheaded by an employee-led team, one of which is an Employee Rewards and Recognition team. As the lead for Phelps' unique and innovative hospitality program, Hospitality Manager Andrea Hodges was invited to serve on that team.

"Our team wanted a way to recognize employees, boost morale and increase their passion for the service they provide," Hodges says. "Once I realized what this team could do and how it could help the Service Pillar, I really embraced it." Hodges suggested to the committee that it look at more ways to recognize employees through patients' eyes, but she knew that a robust program would require something more user-friendly than the existing paper ballot process.



Phelps Memorial Hospital Center, located in Sleepy Hollow, New York, is a 238-bed nonprofit acute-care hospital providing health care to Westchester and surrounding counties.

Phelps patients recognize more than 100 employees every month using the Excellence in a Flash program on the Allen E3 Patient Engagement Solution portal. The outcomes include more engaged employees and happier patients.



HCAHPS REPORT — Phelps Memorial Hospital Center, NY

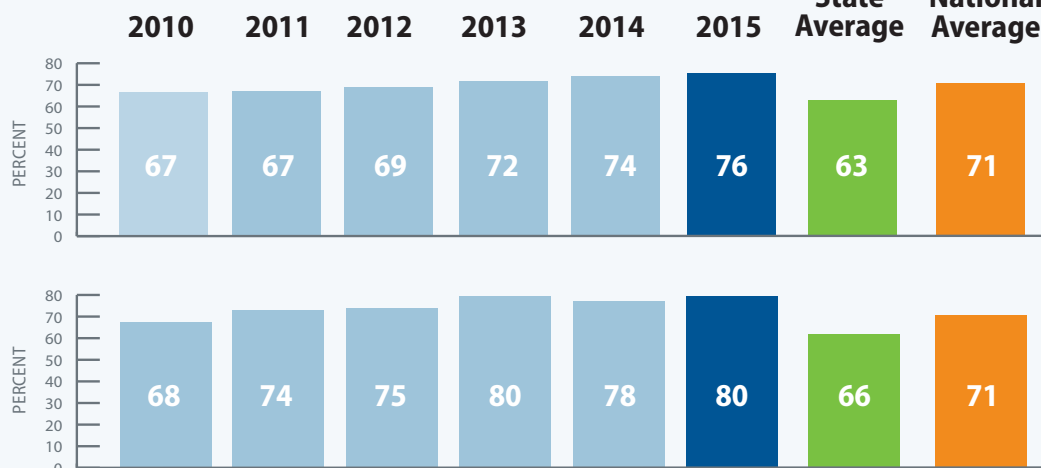


HCAHPS Answer Description

Patients who gave a rating of “9” or “10” (high)

“YES”, patients would definitely recommend the hospital

Answer Percentage by Reporting Year



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The solution was quickly evident to Hodges, who also is a long-time member of Phelps' Allen System Committee, a group that meets regularly with the Allen Technologies' team since the hospital first implemented Allen's interactive patient engagement system in 2004.

“It immediately occurred to me that we could use the Allen system for this purpose. Knowing that the Allen team had helped us already with adding many other patient engagement tools to the system, I knew they could help with this,” she says. “The Allen team was very receptive to the idea, and eager to explore any way possible to make it the best fit for what we were trying to accomplish.

“Allen was one critical piece we implemented that is making our HCAHPS scores possible.”

In less than three weeks, Allen had a model ready for Hodges to demo with the Employee Engagement Rewards and Recognition team, and within a month, the new “Excellence in a Flash” program was up and running over Allen's interactive patient engagement portal already in place on the bedside touchscreen units in patient rooms.

“The Allen portal provides an ideal mechanism for a patient to very easily and quickly give us feedback on employees. If they see or experience something that they really like from a staff member, they simply can turn to their own TVs, and with a few simple clicks they can recognize an employee, tell us who the employee is and even what department they work in. We began to get a lot of information back, at a much greater volume than through our previous system,” notes Pisano.

Hodges' team reviews the nominations monthly, and sends each recognized employee and their manager a letter letting them know about the good things the patient said about the care they provided. In addition, each receives a Service Excellence pin which they proudly wear on their badge. “I can feel the buzz around the hospital when those pins go out, and hear everybody asking those employees about the pins that they are proudly wearing,” she says.

Patients clearly like how easy the Allen portal makes it for them to recognize a staff member. As one commented recently, “It is not often that people get recognized for their dedication and hard work. This is a wonderful opportunity to recognize my nurse for extraordinary care. And it's great that I can fill out a recognition ballot at my bedside, I know once I get home I will be busy and will forget to write a note.”

With the Excellence in a Flash capability on the Allen system, Hodges estimates she receives about 100 nominations through the portal monthly – an astounding 470 percent increase over the previous paper-based process. And the payoff is evident in both employee and patient satisfaction metrics.

Since implementing the Journey to Excellence and Excellence in a Flash program, Phelps has seen a marked improvement in every HCAHPS ratings category. In fact, the hospital outperforms both its state and national benchmarks in virtually every top-level score. The percentage of patients who would recommend the hospital has marched 12 percent higher since the program's start in 2010, and at 80 percent, today is well ahead of both state and national benchmarks of 66 and 71 percent, respectively.

In addition, the percentage of Phelps patients who give the hospital the highest possible satisfaction rating has improved nine percentage points in the past five years. The hospital's top-level satisfaction score of 76 in the most recent 2015 reporting period is significantly better than its state and national peers, which averaged 63 and 71 percent, respectively.

“Our HCAHPS scores are so high they are sometimes hard for me to believe,” says Pisano. “When we first started this journey, our overall scores were

not ones that anybody would really be proud of. But, I'm happy to say that just a few short years since we began this trek to improve our patient performance, our scores are, in some cases, in the 99th percentile in the country. We've done tremendous things in terms of the quality of care that is offered, and improving the whole patient experience, so that when patients leave the hospital, they are leaving with positive thoughts."

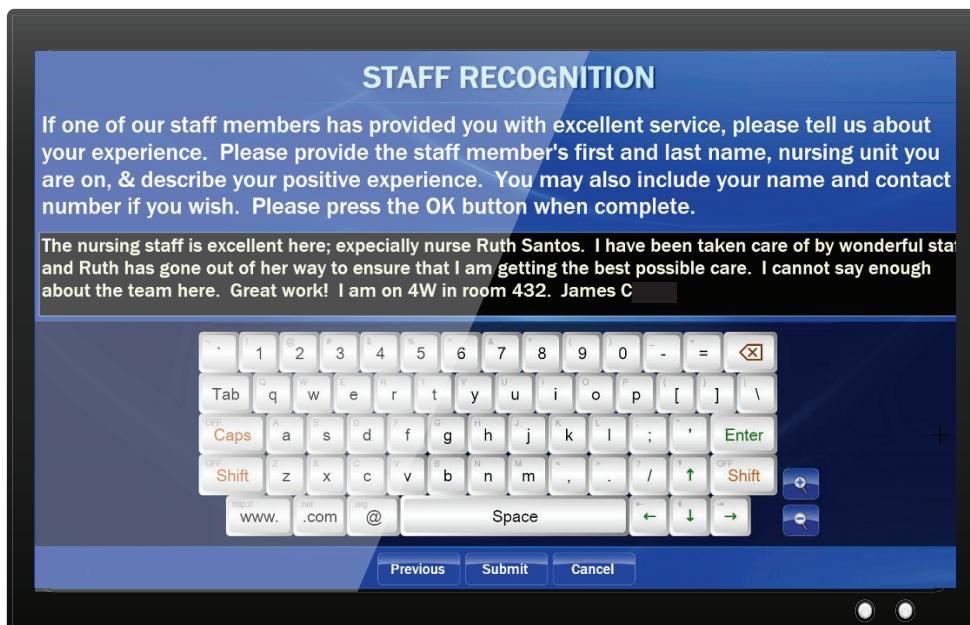
"Allen was one critical piece of several things we implemented that are making that possible," he says.

The hospital employed several communications tools to make staff aware of the Excellence in a Flash program on the Allen system. They included placing screensavers on PCs, ads in the bi-monthly newsletter, posters throughout the facility and notices on the hospital's digital signage. Through their daily interaction with patients, Hodges' hospitality department staff plays a key role in making sure that patients know they can recognize employees through their television touchscreen.

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Vonderheide led the rollout to nurses, focusing on helping them understand their important role in shaping the patient experience. "Sometimes nurses think patient experience initiatives are fluffy marketing stuff," she says. "You have to show them how what we are doing is impacting the patient experience. Patient experience truly goes to the essence of what nurses do every day - making patients feel comfortable, relaxed and well cared for."

"Since we implemented this program, we have seen the overall recommendation of our hospital



Allen's intuitive portal screens make it easy for patients to comment on their care and recognize great service.

climb sky high and we attribute that to having employees being engaged and embracing the Pillars and wanting to go that extra mile," notes Vonderheide. "And, getting recognized by their patients and peers helps them. It just makes them feel like they're valued. Sometimes while going through your day, you do great things, and when you're not recognized for what you are doing, you might lag off. But, when there's recognition from your co-worker or from a patient, it really propels you to continue to work harder."

In addition to the impressive gains in patient satisfaction scores, Vonderheide says the hospital also has seen a huge bump in its annual employee survey scores since implementing the Excellence in a Flash program. "The fact that Phelps now has a system in place to really understand and work with employees and give them the opportunity to participate has really made a difference in how staff feel about working here at Phelps," she says. "Getting the recognition, no matter how small means a

lot to any employee." As one employee noted in a recent employee survey, "It is so wonderful to be recognized by patients and co-workers, it gives employees the inspiration to do even more."

"Without the Allen portal, it would have been a major challenge for us to be this successful."

Hodges agrees. "Once an employee is engaged, they will perform up to the highest level, and that in turn gives great service to our patients. Without the Allen portal, it would have been a major challenge to get patients to nominate staff, and for this program to be so successful. Allen is a proven partner in helping Phelps improve the patient experience while helping recognize hospital staff who excel at patient care and satisfaction."

About Allen Technologies

Allen Technologies, the pioneer of interactive patient solutions for nearly 40 years, transforms the way hospitals engage, educate and entertain patients. Allen Technologies helps hospitals impact patient outcomes, improve patient satisfaction and achieve operational efficiencies. Allen's multiplatform interactive patient engagement system, delivered via television, tablet and bedside monitor, is a robust patient-centric portal for customized patient education, in-room comfort control, and entertainment. Allen is the leader in interactive patient engagement solutions for smart TVs. Allen's E3 Patient Engagement Solution integrates seamlessly with electronic medical records and system platforms including HVAC, housekeeping and food service systems. Learn more at www.engagewithallen.com, www.twitter.com/allen_IPS or www.facebook.com/allentechnologies.

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