

Success Story:

Dedicated Effort Leads to Improved Consumer Assessments, Hospital Ratings and Improved Care

For the past three years, the North Big Horn Hospital (NBHH) of Wyoming has focused on improving one area at a time, and the effort has paid off with improved services and quality of care.

“I am very proud of our staff, and I feel blessed as a member of this community to know that our hospital provides quality care,” said Tina Toner, chief nursing officer at NBHH. “We have less than 3,000 people in our community. If there is an emergency, my family and our community will receive excellent care, which is really important to know.”

Background

Medicare-certified hospitals in the U.S. are listed on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Hospital Compare Guide, a website that gives a star rating for overall service and allows the public to see patient experience ratings, complication rates, death rates and more.

The patient ratings on the website are tied to a survey hospitals administer called the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS). The HCAHPS asks questions focused on doctor communication, pain control and whether rooms are clean and quiet. The survey also asks customers to rate the hospital on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the highest score. Patients are surveyed after they are discharged.

Changes lead to improvements

The NBHH team used the patient surveys to identify areas that could be improved and then prioritized the list to focus on one area at a time. The team analyzed the results quarterly and made changes to drive improvements. Because the HCAHPS can touch nearly every department a patient may see, depending on which department provided him or her care, the endeavor had to be a group effort.

One area NBHH improved was hospital cleanliness. The benefits extended beyond just a cleaner environment as stricter cleaning standards also improve safety by helping to reduce hospital-acquired infections (HAIs). The hospital has had zero HAIs for months.

“I am really proud of that, because it takes every person who comes in contact with the patient,” Toner said. “When you value how clean the environment is, staff sees how it relates to the patients and the quality of care we provide. The whole culture shifted with this improvement.”

Another quality improvement project focused on patient pain management. The Wyoming survey average for pain management is 70 percent, and the score for NBHH is 96 percent. The hospital achieved these scores through a patient-centered approach that involved its pharmacy team in reviewing charts and providing prescribing recommendations.

In 2017 and beyond, NBHH is focusing on improving patient involvement and soliciting more patient feedback. It is also looking to create a chemotherapy support group.

“We have heard over and over that there is a shift in our community in where the best care for them is at our hospital, and they don’t have to go to other places,” said Toner. “To be able to continue to keep doing the best we can is very exciting and reassuring.”

About Mountain-Pacific—Mountain-Pacific is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation and holds federal and state contracts that allow them to oversee the quality of care for Medicare and Medicaid members. Mountain-Pacific works within its region (Montana, Wyoming, Alaska, Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific Territories of Guam and American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) to help improve the delivery of health care and the systems that provide it. Mountain-Pacific’s goal is to increase access to high-quality health care that is affordable, safe and of value to the patients they serve. www.mpqhf.org