

HOSPITAL CHARACTERISTICS

PROGRESS  
WEST

- ▶ Progress West, MO
- ▶ 72 beds
- ▶ [www.progresswesthealthcare.org](http://www.progresswesthealthcare.org)

A member of the BJC HealthCare system, Progress West features inpatient and outpatient care, obstetrics and 24-hour emergency services, including in-house pediatric emergency care through its affiliation with St. Louis Children's Hospital.

S.T.E.E.E.P.



SAFE

Pharmacists talk to patients about medications, assisting in reconciliation and answering any questions.



PATIENT-CENTERED

Since its opening in 2007, all processes were designed around the patient.

## THE WAY IT'S ALWAYS BEEN

### The Problem

Progress West didn't so much have a problem but an opportunity. By opening a new hospital, executives were able to create a culture and atmosphere that would best serve patients and staff alike. They didn't have to contend with the "well this is the way it's always been

done" excuse. All processes were designed with a patient- and family-centered approach and employees were hired to fit in a service-oriented culture. ED patients left before being seen, 40 percent of these had waited more than four hours. The hospital was losing about \$7 million in revenue annually as a result.

### The Solution

Opening a new hospital gave senior leaders the ability to install a service-oriented culture from the beginning. "We knew from the start that the only way to truly differentiate ourselves was through teamwork and customer service," says Janet Nystrom, manager of human resource and organizational development.

Senior leaders decided on four service priorities that all Progress West employees commit to—safety, courtesy, expertise and efficiency. Additionally, senior leaders were able to take the latest proven innovations in hospital process design and incorporate them into everyday work life. For Progress West, this meant designing processes around the patient and family.

### Results

The employee turnover rate through June 2009 was 13 percent.

Progress West ranks higher than the national average in all Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems data on the Hospital Compare web

site. It's HCAHPS results show:

- » 85 percent Progress West patients would recommend the hospital to friends and family, compared to 68 percent nationally;
- » 84 percent rate the hospital with either a nine or 10 (1-10, ten being highest), compared to 64 percent nationally;
- » 62 percent rate when asked if hospital staff explained medicines before giving them to patients, compared with 59 percent nationally.

### Background

Let's face it, many of us can clearly see better and more efficient ways of getting someone else's work done. How many times have you said, why is he doing that way, wouldn't this be easier? It's a little harder to see the errors of your own and fix them, but what if you were able to start over, wipe the slate clean and create new ways to get work done without prior convictions and assumptions?

When hospital leaders opened Progress West Healthcare Center, O'Fallon, Mo., in 2007, they took full advantage of the clean slate and designed new work processes. Additionally, they had the opportunity to hire 325 new employees and develop their service-culture skills to provide patient and family centered care to every patient that walks through the 74-bed hospital. "We knew from the start that the only way to differentiate ourselves was through teamwork and cus-

**TEAM MEMBERS**

**John Antes**

President

**Ed Elder**

Pharmacy Manager

**Debbie Ilges, RN**

Interim Manager For Patient Care Services

**Charles Lewis, RN**

Chief Nurse Executive

**Janet Nystrom**

Manager of Human Resources and Organizational Development

customer service," says Janet Nystrom, manager of human resources and organizational development and one of the original staff members responsible for hiring. "Courtesy is what differentiates us."

Senior leaders decided on developing a service culture based on the Disney Institute's four service standards. For Progress West, these translated to: safety; courtesy; expertise and efficiency. The next step was to hire employees interested in working in a place focused on superior customer service. "We had an opportunity to build from the ground up," says Nystrom. This required tweaking the hiring process to make sure that potential employees knew the requirements up front. First, candidates were screened to make sure they met the minimum technical requirements for the position. This was done by the human resources department. Then, the hiring manager screened for confidence, experience and background. Finally, the interviewing employee had a meeting with future team members.

Nystrom says that one of the keys to success was being honest with the prospective employee from the start. Each applicant is asked to watch a service-culture related video posted on the hospital web site. They are then asked questions regarding the video during the interview process.

Candidates are also asked to give examples of customer service from their daily work experiences, especially courtesy and compassion.

In addition to seven-weeks of training, new employees attend four classes on the service priorities. These classes feature all different members of the team, from housekeeping to nursing in order to foster a team-

approach to care. "Everyone is a caregiver, even if they don't have direct patient contact," says Nystrom.

The result is a culture of engaged employees. The employee turnover rate through June 2009 is 13 percent. Nystrom says overall employees are very excited about the culture. "I hear a lot of 'this is why I went into nursing in the first place,'" she says.

Another bonus for hospital administrators was that they were able to design processes that featured the patient in the center of all care processes. "Progress West designed work flows to maximize the impact on the patient's experience, satisfaction and quality of care," says Debbie Ilges, RN, interim manager for patient care services.

Patient-centric processes assist in fostering team-building. When employees connect their work back to how it affects the patient, traditional silos that exist in most hospitals begin to break down. "You don't work for your department," says Nystrom. "You work for the patient." And, since leaders created the processes from day one, there wasn't the traditional pushback against changing the culture. They were trained from the start on the patient-centric processes, says Nystrom.

**Principles of  
Performance  
Excellence**

**The Patient Experience**

While many hospitals have a decentralized pharmacy structure with pharmacists on the floor available for consultation, Progress West took it a step further, integrating the pharmacists in the care team

and having them enter the patient's room to consult directly with the patient. The hospital pharmacists work with the patient to improve the medication reconciliation list by educating patients about all drugs, including over-the-counter and herbal remedies. They also provide expertise and support to the nurses and physicians in the care team. This in turn reassures patient, nurses and physicians.

Pharmacy manager Ed Elder says that the pharmacists are able to education the patients, nurses and physicians about the nuances of certain drugs, such as extended release formulas. Other caregivers might not be as informed about these changes. This information sharing has a positive impact on patient safety and care, he says.

"Safety is our number one priority," says Charles Lewis, RN, chief nurse executive. "Having a pharmaceutical knowledge expert sitting at the bedside reassures patients and staff."

Ilges agrees. In addition to the caregiver support the pharmacists provide, they provide a valuable service to the patients.

Recently she spent some time in the hospital as a patient and said that having the pharmacists provide drug information made her feel safer. "The patient perception is that physicians don't have time to answer every question," she says. "The pharmacist decreased my anxiety about the medication."

Elders says that many patients wait a long time before asking any health professional about drug-related questions. While staff did what they could about educating patients about pharmaceuticals, there was time constraint in addition to the fact that the body of pharmaceutical knowledge is constantly changing and expanding.

"Patients ask questions they've had for a long time," says Lewis. Further, he enjoys the relationship with the patient.

"Pharmacists enjoy and are passionate about providing this type of care," he says. They are supportive and enthusiastic about having the opportunity to offer this type of care to the patient.

"The culture starts with the patient, we are always asking, 'is this is the best thing for the patient,'" Lewis says

Having pharmacists in the middle of the all patient care discussions has strengthened teambuilding throughout the hospital units. Monthly meetings help care teams meld, but constant interaction on the unit has fostered a relationship that is nearly seamless.

Being able to consult with pharmacists reassures nursing staff about medication administration and being about to consult with the nursing staff reassures the pharmacists of the medication's effectiveness. The end result is safer, more effective patient care.

### **Continual Improvement**

Since efficiency is one of the four service priorities at Progress West, continual improvement is built into the system and culture. Similar to other organizations, if there is a better way to do something, that benefits the patient, senior leaders listen. Unlike other organizations, Progress West has clearly communicated its message of patient-centered care. "We are always willing and checking to see how we can improve efficiency and safety," says Lewis.