

The Organization

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital - Hamilton
<http://www.rwjhamilton.org/>

The Challenge

Improve overall patient satisfaction, and meet the requirements for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

The Allegiance Solution

Deployed PatientVoice as a natural extension of the hospital's online presence. The system captures the feedback and routes it to the responsible person, where it is acted upon immediately.

PatientVoice also provided Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital the tools necessary to meet the high standards of customer feedback and patient care required to win the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

The Results

- Consolidating and simplifying patient feedback
- Providing a single point of feedback flow
- Improving rapid and appropriate patient problem escalation and resolution
- Delivering ever-improving value to patients

Listening to Patients, Managing Complaints, and Measuring Satisfaction are Critical to the Success of Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital

Founded in 1884, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton (RWJ Hamilton) is an award-winning medical center providing state-of-the-art care for more than 200,000 patients annually. The hospital has more than 600 affiliated physicians and surgeons in more than 30 medical specialties, including cardiac care, cancer care, emergency medicine, pediatrics and maternal-fetal medicine.

RWJ Hamilton has received a number of awards, including the 2006 Distinguished Hospital for Clinical Excellence by Healthgrades, in which the hospital was ranked among the top five percent of hospitals in the nation in terms of risk-adjusted mortality and complications rates. The hospital has also received the Consumer Choice Award for the past two years. The award recognizes hospitals with the best overall quality and image as determined by a study of more than 140,000 healthcare consumers. Other awards include the Governor's Award for Performance Excellence from Quality New Jersey, the Diversity Excellence Award presented by the Human Resources Management Association and in 2004; RWJ Hamilton was the only healthcare institution to receive the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

Traditional Patient Feedback Systems both Inefficient and Costly

Like many large healthcare institutions, RWJ Hamilton consists of several semi-autonomous departments. Although a patient may come in contact with several of these departments during his/her hospital visit, RWJ Hamilton did not have a smooth process for sharing patient feedback among them. Patient satisfaction surveys and feedback forms were managed via paper and email, which were both inefficient and costly. These communications methods, while certainly attempting to address the concerns, make it difficult for organizations to collect feedback from all 'touch points', are time consuming and are not truly anonymous. In addition, by the time a paper-based report reached the appropriate person's desk, the issue may have already escalated, patients may have left the hospital or employees may have taken the problem into their own hands.

The lack of an effective feedback system made it difficult for patients to comfortably communicate with the hospital about their last visit or for the hospital to understand the concerns of patients and staff. In addition, RWJ Hamilton was determined to meet the high standards of customer feedback and patient care required by the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. The presidential award is given to "organizations that have substantially benefited the economic or social well-being of the United States through improvements resulting in performance excellence." The award is given annually to organizations in five categories: manufacturing, service, small business, education and health care; and recipients are judged on their efforts in the following areas: leadership; strategic planning; customer and market focus; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; human resource focus; process management; and results. A critical requirement of the award is listening and learning from customer feedback to improve patient care.

A prescription for change was in order for Robert Wood Johnson. After evaluating several feedback systems, the hospital selected the Allegiance Active Listening System.

Superior System Simplifies Process and Improves Efficiencies

In an effort to better capture patient and visitor experiences, RWJ Hamilton implemented PatientVoice™, a Web-based feedback management system and a component of the Allegiance Active Listening System. PatientVoice is a comprehensive, Web-based feedback management system that provides RWJ Hamilton's patients with a completely anonymous and confidential forum for submitting feedback and asking questions.

To the outside user, PatientVoice appears as a natural extension of the hospital's online presence at <http://www.rwjhamilton.org/>. Customers can visit the hospital's Web site either during their stay or once they return home to submit their feedback and questions directly to the hospital's Patient Relations Manager, who oversees the feedback management system. Once received into the system, the feedback is immediately categorized, trended, and flagged for special areas of concern (such as patient complaints). The patient relations manager then reviews each submission, and if necessary routes the feedback to a key staff member who is responsible for providing a timely and appropriate response.

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital

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By implementing PatientVoice, we made it clear to our customers and our caregivers that patient care is our number one priority."

*-Monica Olaff
Patient Relations Manager
RWJ University Hospital*

Allegiance Benefits

Get actionable information with instant reporting. With an anonymous reporting system via the internet, the Active Listening System allows an organization to be informed immediately of any concern or suggestion. Patients and staff have the freedom to log on and submit concerns, complaints, compliments or ideas. Management then is able to see what is really going on and can respond accordingly.

24/7/365 system access. Providing a premier online feedback system and comprehensive management tool set offers your company the most complete and flexible reporting system possible. Your patients and staff will have the capability of communicating important information and details anytime, anywhere making it a complete feedback system for every side of your organization.

Flexible system adapts to your needs. The Active Listing System is engineered to be extremely flexible, tailored to meet the unique needs of your organization.

Armed With Tools Positioned for the Baldrige National Quality Award

"PatientVoice provides us with a real-time picture of what is happening in patient care, where problems are occurring, and how long problems are taking to resolve," said Monica Olaff, Patient Relations Manager for RWJ Hamilton. "In the past, we would not have been able to respond as quickly. By implementing PatientVoice, we made it clear to our customers and our caregivers that patient care is our number one priority. In addition, as a result of being able to listen better to our customers, we were in a better position to approach the Baldrige Award application process, armed with the understanding that patient feedback and satisfaction were going to play an important role in the evaluation process."

Category three of the Health Care Criteria for Performance Excellence developed by the Baldrige National Quality Program is "Focus on Patients, Other Customers, and Markets." Among this category's applications questions are:

- How do you listen and learn to determine key patient and other customer requirements, needs, and changing expectations and their relative importance to patients' and other customers' health care purchasing or relationship decisions?
- How do you use relevant information and feedback from current and former patients and other customers, including marketing information, patient and other customer loyalty and retention data, win/loss analysis and complaint data for purposes of planning?
- How do you manage patient and other customer complaints?
- How do you ensure that complaints are resolved effectively and promptly?
- How do you determine patient and other customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction?

"The Baldrige application made it clear that listening to our customers, measuring customer satisfaction and managing complaints were critical to winning the award," added Olaff. "Our paper-based system could not have provided us with the process or the level of information and management that we needed to truly address customers' questions and concerns or address the questions and requirements in category three of the criteria. That is why we turned to Allegiance."

Attention to Service through Active Listening

As a result of implementing an automated problem resolution process, not only did patients and hospital employees see a marked difference in the hospital's attention to service, RWJ Hamilton was awarded the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 2004, an award which RWJ Hamilton gives PatientVoice much credit for helping to earn.

"Having PatientVoice in place helped us to win the award," stated Olaff. "As we mapped out our process for listening to customers and resolving complaints, the Allegiance tools were critical to making sure that we could capture, manage, analyze and respond to the complaints and questions we received from our patients. We were able to consolidate all of our feedback through a convenient, central location and continually measure patient satisfaction with their care. Our patient-focused process, powered by PatientVoice, allowed us to demonstrate to the Baldrige Award examiners and judges that we are serious about listening to our patients and ensuring their satisfaction and care."

Since winning the award, RWJ Hamilton has also been recognized for its clinical quality measures, its quality doctors and nursing staff, and patient safety. The hospital has also been active in the Baldrige Sharing Days, which provide award-winners the opportunity to mentor other healthcare institutions on what they can do to help prepare for the Baldrige application process and eventually attempt to win the award.

"The spirit of the Baldrige award is sharing information so that others can be successful," concluded Olaff. "We worked hard to win the award, and it is in the best interest of our hospital and healthcare consumers that we share how we were able to win the 2004 Baldrige Award, including the benefits of using PatientVoice. We received the Baldrige Award for excellence in organizational performance and for delivering 'ever-improving value to customers.' That's the kind of prognosis that makes our patients, staff and hospital administrators feel very good about Robert Wood Johnson."

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