

# Case Study



## Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJ Hamilton)

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Turns to Allegiance to Improve Its Press Ganey/HCAHPS Satisfaction Scores and Reduce Employee Turnover

WINNER  
of the Malcolm  
Baldrige National  
Quality Award

ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON  
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL  
HAMILTON  
A Higher Standard of Care  
rwjhamilton.org

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton (RWJ Hamilton) is an award-winning medical center that provides 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.

RWJ Hamilton delivers excellent service for which it has received countless recognition and numerous awards, including the Press Ganey Summit Award presented to the hospital's Cancer Institute. It is also a four-year repeat winner of the Consumer Choice Award, which recognizes hospitals that have the best overall quality and image based on a study of more than 140,000 healthcare consumers. Recently, the hospital was accredited by the State of New Jersey and the Joint Commission for Stroke compliance. And in 2004, RWJ Hamilton received the highest honor for performance excellence—the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, presented annually to high-performing organizations by the President of the United States.

### Paying Attention to Patient Satisfaction

RWJ Hamilton's focus on patient satisfaction and employee engagement has played a critical role in its success.

"Our focus on providing quality service to our patients contributes significantly to our revenue, and the industry recognition continues to help validate our reputation as a quality care, patient-centered organization," said Monica Olaff, patient relations manager for RWJ Hamilton.

RWJ Hamilton currently relies on two methods for measuring patient satisfaction: Press Ganey questionnaires and HCAHPS (Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems) surveys, the first national, standardized, publicly reported surveys of patients' perspectives of hospital care.

### Challenge

- Patients often interact with multiple departments during visits, making it difficult for departments to share feedback
- Inefficient processes for managing patient satisfaction surveys and feedback forms
- RWJ wanted to influence patient satisfaction scores by increasing employee engagement

### Allegiance Solutions

- Allegiance PatientVoice and Employee Engagement

### Results

- Industry leading patient satisfaction scores (Press Ganey scores raise from 67% to 90%) as a result of RWJ's best practices and use of Allegiance
- Numerous award wins and industry recognition
- Vastly improved efficiencies and streamlined processes
- RWJ now has a real-time view of patient care across its organization, enabling it to resolve patient concerns more quickly

### Conventional Methods, Traditional Challenges

Like most large healthcare institutions, RWJ Hamilton consists of many semi-autonomous departments. During visits, patients often interact with several of these. In the past, RWJ Hamilton did not have a smooth process for sharing patient feedback between departments. In addition, patient satisfaction surveys and feedback forms were managed via paper and email, which made it difficult to quickly and fully understand patient needs and concerns. As a result, in 1999, when RWJ Hamilton began its patient satisfaction improvement journey, its inpatient satisfaction scores were at 67 percent.

"We have industry leading satisfaction scores as a result of our best practices, and the Allegiance Engage solution is a critical element of that success. Ultimately, we rely on Allegiance to help improve our satisfaction scores, and we definitely pay attention to our scores and our employee engagement because they impact our revenue." — Monica Olaff, Patient Relations Manager

# Allegiance Case Study



Traditional customer feedback methods can make it difficult for organizations to collect and cross-reference feedback from all “touch points.” In addition, by the time a paper-based report reaches the appropriate person’s desk, the issue may have already escalated or patients may have left the hospital.

The lack of an efficient feedback system made it difficult for patients to comfortably communicate their concerns. This conflicted with RWJ Hamilton’s commitment to meeting the needs of patients by creating customer loyalty that is measured via patient satisfaction.

## Superior System Simplifies Process and Improves Efficiencies

To better capture patient and visitor experiences, RWJ Hamilton implemented PatientVoice™, a comprehensive Web-based feedback management system and a component of the Allegiance Engage platform. PatientVoice provides RWJ Hamilton’s patients with a completely anonymous and confidential forum for submitting feedback and asking questions. Capturing this data in real-time directly impacts the ability to act on the information and impact customer satisfaction scores.

To the outside user, PatientVoice appears as a natural extension of the hospital’s online presence at its website, [www.rwjhamilton.org](http://www.rwjhamilton.org). Patients and families can visit the hospital’s website 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 the staff member who is responsible for providing a timely and appropriate response.

“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 Olaff. “In the past, we would not have been able to respond as quickly. By implementing PatientVoice, it became evident to our patients 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 processes outlined in our Baldrige Award application.”

## Employee Engagement Influences Patient Satisfaction

Influencing patient feedback has been the ongoing commitment of RWJ Hamilton’s employees, who have their own Allegiance-powered channel for communicating comments, questions and concerns directly to the hospital’s management. A recent employee satisfaction survey revealed that more than 80 percent of employees understand and know the hospital’s mission and nearly 80 percent feel that their co-workers are working and cooperating as a team to accomplish that mission.

“From our Employee Satisfaction surveys, we have been able to show that our employees know what our mission is, live the mission, and work together as a team to accomplish that mission,” commented

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– Monica Olaff, Patient Relations Manager

Olaff. “That level of engagement influences how we treat our patients. And with our high Press Ganey patient satisfaction scores, we can draw a direct correlation between employee engagement and patient satisfaction.”

Olaff recognizes that employee engagement is linked to a number of factors, including recognition, feeling valued and making a difference. Also critical to their level of engagement is leadership, because, as Olaff suggested, “everything comes from the top down.” When all of these elements exist, on top of feeling like they have a voice, employees are more engaged and less likely to be searching for the next opportunity.

## Attention to Service through Total Engagement

To improve its patient satisfaction scores, the hospital adopted proven satisfaction strategies along with the Baldrige criteria and implemented Allegiance solutions. Thanks to the hospital’s focus in these areas and its use of Allegiance, RWJ Hamilton now has consistently high Press Ganey scores ranging from 85 percent to 90 percent.

“As we implemented our process for listening to customers and resolving complaints, as well as how to help influence employee engagement, the Allegiance tools allowed us to capture, manage, analyze and respond to all questions, comments and concerns we received from across the organization,” Olaff said. “By using this patient-focused process, it demonstrates that we are serious about listening to our patients and ensuring their satisfaction and care.” She continued, “We have industry leading satisfaction scores as a result of our best practices, and the Allegiance Engage solution is a critical element of that success. Ultimately, we rely on Allegiance to help improve our satisfaction scores, and we definitely pay attention to our scores and our employee engagement because they impact our revenue.”

Moreover, Olaff said, “We work hard as an organization to streamline processes. It has been our commitment to improving our satisfaction scores and creating engaged customers and employees that has led to our leadership status today. The Allegiance suite of tools has been integral to that success.”

For more information, visit [www.allegiance.com](http://www.allegiance.com).  
To demo a product or contact Allegiance sales,  
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