

The Outer Banks Hospital Redefines Excellence in Healthcare— Top-Performing Client was the Recipient of Four Awards!

The Outer Banks Hospital, Nags Head, North Carolina

Winning even *one* award is considered a great achievement. Winning four awards, however, is something altogether different. For The Outer Banks Hospital in Nags Head, North Carolina, words like *awe* come to mind. They took home awards for:

HealthStream Research

HealthStream Research is a national leader in the measurement of physician, employee, patient, and community satisfaction for healthcare organizations. We currently work with more than 1,100 facilities nationwide, including many of the nation's largest for-profit and not-for-profit health systems and specialty healthcare companies.

Overall Emergency Department Satisfaction

First Place, Small Hospital

Overall Outpatient Satisfaction

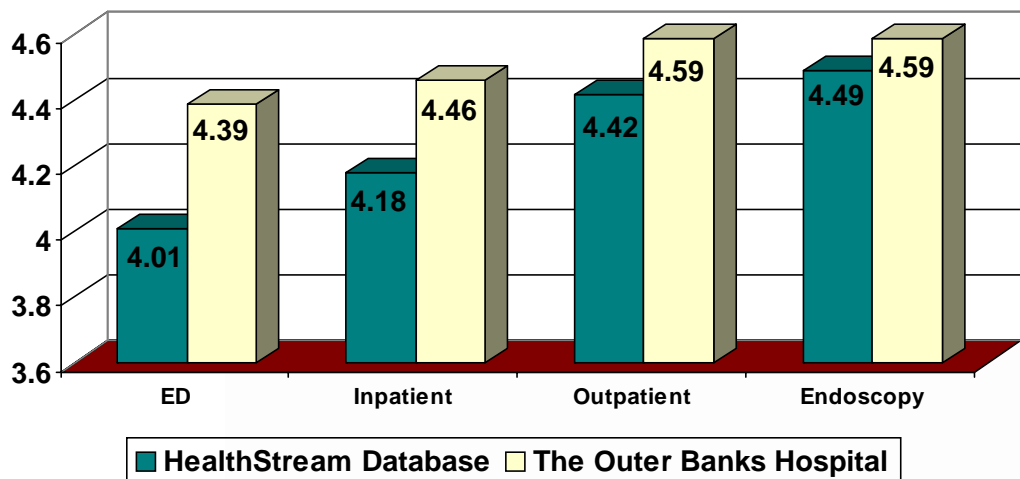
Most Improved

Overall Outpatient Satisfaction

First Place, Small Hospital

Overall Satisfaction

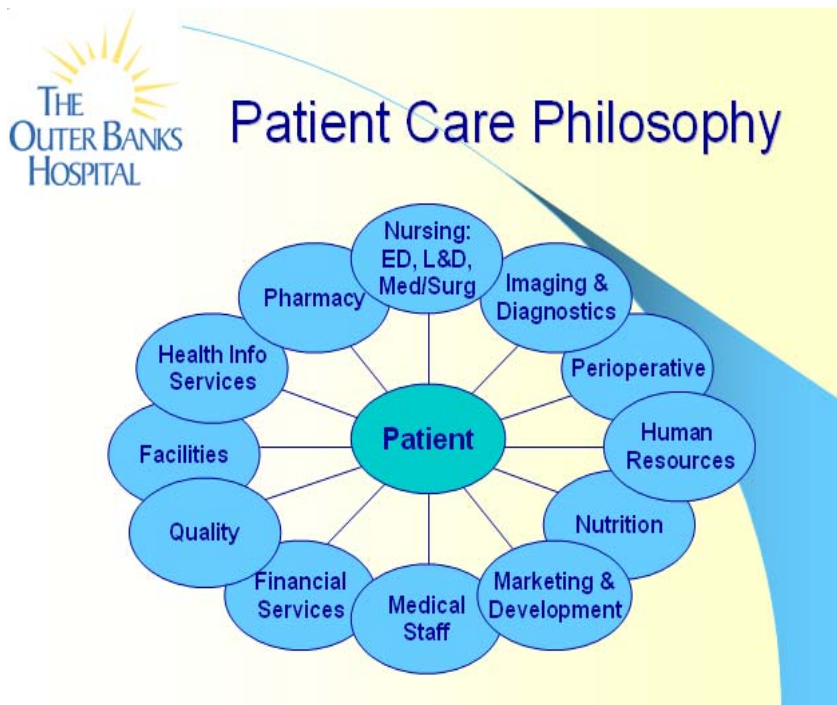
First Place, Outpatient – Endoscopy



Patient Satisfaction Results

So how did they achieve so much? What were the driving factors that led to such amazing satisfaction scores?

“We began by focusing on the most important things *first*,” said Donna Cheek. “Everything we initiated had to be based on achieving our mission.”



Their Mission:

- To provide Dare County and surrounding areas with efficient access to an optimal range of quality hospital, medical, and health services.
- The hospital will build on its relationship with Chesapeake Health and University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina to forge alliances that will bring improved health services to citizens of and visitors to the Outer Banks.

Building a Patient-Centered Culture

“We were a new hospital, and not only a new hospital but the first hospital in the area. In the beginning we experienced high turnover and difficulty in hiring qualified staff, mainly because we brought something totally new to the area. The first step in achieving any organizational mission is to identify the roadblocks. The key to success here is getting *everybody* involved and aligned to the mission.

Roadblocks:

- Hiring qualified initial staff
- Establishing desired culture
- Mitigating environmental distractions
- Medical staff issues
- Sensitive political issues
- High cost of living

“The roadblocks we identified could not be tackled like a linear to-do list. To truly succeed, we had to take a holistic approach to all roadblocks,” said Cheek. “To start, we surveyed our employees to discover what they needed *and* what they wanted. We knew that we had to create a culture of excellence before we could achieve excellence.”

“The surveys provided feedback to everyone, which quickly led to a culture of *warmth*. Everyone could see the connections between what they did and the impact it would ultimately have on the patient,” said Cheek. “To create a culture of collaboration without silos, we decentralized virtually everything. We engaged in a truly interdisciplinary philosophy so that we could understand each other, help each other, and build a team that was larger in scope than any of its parts. The *patient* is why we’re here—and the patient is not fragmented. We knew that we couldn’t be fragmented either. A patient doesn’t experience a nurse, a doctor, a receptionist, and a physician assistant—they experience a *hospital*. Everything we did had to glow with excellence.”

The fight against silos within the organization was also addressed by the design of the hospital. “The patient room areas are set up like pods, with 6 rooms to a pod. This totally decentralizes patient care by bringing the care to the patient. With the pod design, we are always at the center. This gives us the ability to survey everything that is going on around us and rapidly respond,” said Cheek.

To have the best culture, you need the best people. The Outer Banks Hospital faced a wide range of roadblocks to success. After all, imagine if the picture below was outside *your* window every day:

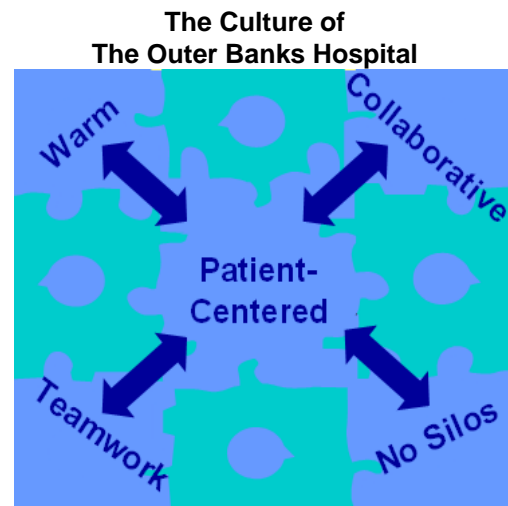


“We’ve got fishing, surfing, and a fantastic beach. Factor in that we get two to three times more volume in the summer season—right when everybody, including staff, wants to be out in these beautiful surroundings. To build a strong team that was going to deliver the best care possible *and* fit our culture, we had to start hiring tough—with even tougher expectations,” said Cheek.

By hiring for skill *and* for cultural fit, the interviewing process took on a new life. “Most healthcare workers are accustomed to fitting in with clinical models—but when you show them that they must be part of a *culture* of excellence, they start to see that this team is more than what you do; it’s about how we all do it together,” said Cheek. “Hospitals need to focus as much on what a candidate has done in the past as they do on what they expect from them in the future.”

Goal-Setting

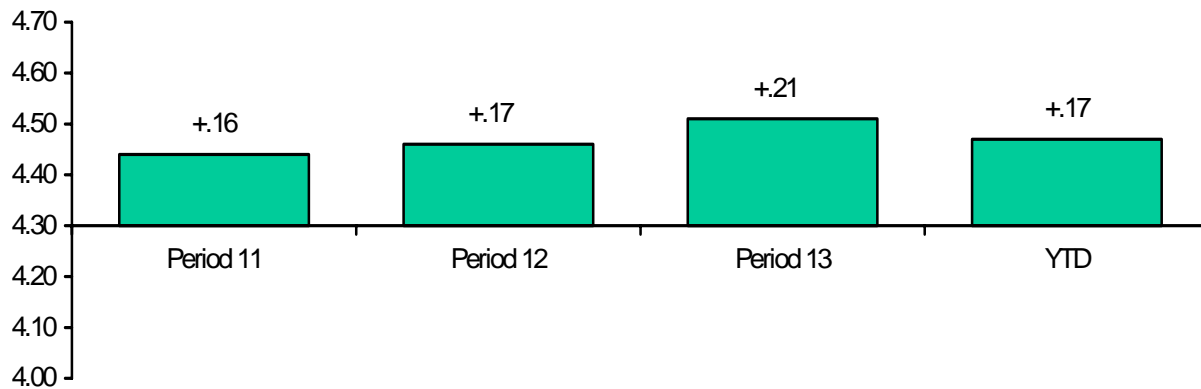
As many HealthStream Research clients have found, setting high expectations usually brings high results. If there is no goal linked to tracking the amount of time a patient waits to see a doctor, then wait times won’t be on anyone’s radar. If you set a specific goal, you’ve given everyone the tools



needed to reduce that wait time. By setting goals, everyone's attention is brought to bear. And for all that The Outer Banks Hospital expected from their employees, they needed *everyone's* attention.

The Outer Banks Hospital set some aggressive goals for their patient satisfaction scores. As you'll see in the chart on the next page, they managed to exceed each and every goal!

The Outer Banks Hospital set an aggressive goal of 4.30 for their Overall Inpatient Satisfaction score. Each period measured saw that goal busted, with a YTD score that was .17 higher than their original goal!



“Everything we do here is tracked, and everything has a goal. And look at the success we’ve had!” said Cheek.

The Trifecta of Communication, Accountability and Recognition

Communication is a panacea for just about any organizational obstacle. A defining characteristic of The Outer Banks Hospital's communication success is their interdisciplinary rounding. “We develop a plan of care with a team of *all* disciplines that will have *any* contact with the patient—and we do this every single day,” said Cheek. “And with the culture we’ve built, everyone wants to do this—because it’s right! We save lives, after all,” beamed Cheek. “This approach brings everyone—physicians, nurses, and employees—together. That is what a culture of excellence in patient-centered care will bring you!”

Communication is addressed through an interdisciplinary approach at all levels of care. “Call-backs to the patients are performed hospital-wide. We call the physicians, surgeons, *anyone* that was involved in caring for the patient, so that we can have a detailed picture of what is going on. This allows us to communicate in the best possible way with our patients, and they can sense that we are all on the same page,” said Cheek. “And we call every single one of our Left Without Being Seen patients.”

Accountability is addressed through staff business cards. “When anyone interacts with patients, they give them a business card. This way, the patient has a *name* to attach to the care giver. This also shows each patient how committed we are to delivering the best care, and it is something that most hospitals don’t do,” said Cheek.

To maintain a culture of excellence, you’ve got to have a strong recognition plan for your employees. Aggressive recognition was the key to mitigating the environmental distractions that

Success Story: The Outer Banks Hospital

surrounded the hospital. “If you’re not getting warmth and fun at work, you’ll be driven to find warmth and fun outside of work, at the expense of patient care.

The Outer Banks Hospital has a plan for recognition that would improve *any* organization. “We have volunteer Employee Teams that are focused on reward and recognition programs. We’ve got an Employee of the Month program that has been incredibly successful. Winners are recognized hospital-wide, and the winners even take the time to thank their supporters. It is a great source of pride for everyone,” said Cheek.

Recognition is not just about individual performance; it should also focus on the achievements of the entire organization. “Every award we win is accompanied by a press release, and the awards are out for all to see around the hospital. We talk up our successes and announce our achievements in our newsletter. We never pass up an opportunity to celebrate success, for both the individual employees and our organization as a whole,” said Cheek.

The Outer Banks Hospital isn’t resting on the laurels of their past successes. “We are all so proud and excited about winning four awards from HealthStream Research—but next year, we want five!” exclaimed Cheek. “We’re little, but we’re mighty!”