

Physician Satisfaction: A Shared Responsibility Among Hospital Leaders

Lancaster General Hospital, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Located in Lancaster Pennsylvania, Lancaster General has served its community for over 100 years. According to COO Marion McGowan, strong community support is one reason Lancaster General has been able to develop and maintain successful relationships with their physicians. Lancaster General has been the recipient of several prestigious awards through the years, including recognition as one of the 50 Best Hospitals in the U.S. in five categories in the edition of *U.S. News and World Report*. Other awards include a Distinguished Hospital Award for Patient Safety, presented by HealthGrades, and recognition in *Training* magazine as one of the nation's leading organizations in human capital development. In 2002, Lancaster General was recognized as a Magnet hospital. Also, Lancaster General Hospital consistently performs at the top of our national physician database of more than 660 hospitals when looking at overall satisfaction with the hospital and physician satisfaction with nursing care.

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“Lancaster believes strongly in physician recognition,” explains Marion. The administration shows its appreciation for physician “extra effort” through handwritten notes, car wash tickets, bookstore gifts cards, etc., which are sent to the medical staff on holidays and national Doctors Day. The hospital also has an annual off-site forum where physicians, board members, and administrators come together for discussion and strategic planning for the hospital. Further, an in-house physician journal provides another arena for the hospital to recognize outstanding physicians and also communicate hospital news, practice updates, and physician-related events.

Like any hospital today, Lancaster General faces its share of challenges with maintaining physician loyalty and satisfaction. According to Dr. Bruce Pokorney, Chief Medical Officer at Lancaster, “One of the greatest challenges is developing a high level of physician involvement such that physicians feel an ownership in the hospital and participate in essential planning processes.” Dr. Pokorney understands that physicians face great demands regarding their time and tries to be sensitive to the changing priorities they face on a daily basis. “Paying attention to the daily operational issues that physicians must encounter is the essential first step before any good relationships can be established,” explains Dr. Pokorney. Lancaster General employs medical directors for key service lines. Each director is paired with a service line administrator, and the two work together to promote physician/staff communication and resolve problems.

Success Story: Lancaster General Hospital

The administrative team at Lancaster General has done a wonderful job at building physician relationships and maintaining physician satisfaction. Marion McGowan and Dr. Pokorney gave several words of wisdom to fellow hospital administrators and CEOs:

- Engage physicians in “win-win” situations
- Avoid a top-end, heavy-handed approach with physicians
- Engage physicians in decision-making processes, strategic planning, and hospital governance
- Respond quickly to physician concerns and issues
- Engender a sense of “shared Hospital ownership” with the medical staff

While awards and high scores are an outward sign of the great things happening at Lancaster General, the successful relationship between administration and physicians has been a key to their success. Marion stressed, “Physician satisfaction is a shared responsibility among senior leaders, clinical staff, and our Business Development Group. We all appreciate how important physicians are to maintaining our status as a top performing hospital.”