

## Physician Satisfaction: An Atmosphere of Openness and Trust

Waukesha Memorial Hospital, Waukesha, WI

Waukesha Memorial Hospital is a 301-bed facility located in Waukesha, WI. In 2006, Waukesha Memorial scored significantly higher than the HealthStream Research Norm for all three Overall Indicators, including the “Overall Satisfaction” item, the “Overall Satisfaction with Nursing” item, and the “Would Recommend” item. In addition, they recently received a “2006 Excellence through Insight Award” for having one of the highest mean scores for the “Overall Satisfaction” item in the HealthStream Research National Database.

We spoke with the Vice President of Medical Staff, Dr. James Gardner, to find out what Waukesha Memorial has been doing to attain such high performance.

### 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.

### Feeling Listened to and Respected

Waukesha Memorial has historically had an atmosphere of openness and trust between administration and medical staff. They believe this atmosphere develops over time by being open and honest. Waukesha Memorial recognizes that there will always be differences between administration and the medical staff, but the most important thing is that the medical staff feels listened to and respected. This type of relationship will ultimately build trust between administration and physicians. This has recently been challenged by changes in the marketplace. Fortunately, Waukesha Memorial already had a system in place to respond to physicians. About three years ago the President of Waukesha Memorial openly promised to respond to physician complaints or concerns within 72 hours. He even gave out his phone number to emphasize his commitment to the medical staff.

This response time had always been a goal of the administration, but this action formalized the policy for the medical staff. This commitment to respond to physicians applies to all of the staff of the hospital. Sometimes the response may simply be an explanation about what can or can not be done, but any response is greatly appreciated by the medical staff. This process creates an environment of continual discussion and follow-up between administration and the medical staff.

### **An Emphasis on Educating Physicians**

Waukesha Memorial also places emphasis on continually educating physicians. This education is accomplished through the Physician Leadership Academy, or PLA. The PLA is operated by an advisory board and has been in place for the last 3 years. Throughout the year, the PLA will bring in a speaker for a presentation that usually lasts for half the day. The PLA places emphasis on non-routine topics, such as budgeting, that physicians can relate to and in terms that they can understand. PLA presentations are well attended by both medical staff leaders and members of the administration, including the CEO. This not only shows his commitment to the medical staff, but also supports the environment of openness and honesty that is so valued at Waukesha Memorial.

Waukesha Memorial has also developed a physician outreach program in addition to the PLA. A member of the physician outreach team personally visits medical staff offices at least twice a year. During this visit, the physician outreach representative meets with the office manager to discuss any problems they are having with Waukesha Memorial. This visit also allows Waukesha Memorial to find out what they can do to better support their medical staff outside of the hospital. Once again, Waukesha Memorial is using this program as an opportunity to further develop the culture of openness and trust with their medical staff.

### **An Emphasis on the Relationship between Medical Staff and Nursing Staff**

In addition to the PLA and the physician outreach program, Waukesha Memorial also places high emphasis on the relationship between the medical staff and the nursing staff. The Chief Nursing Executive, Mary Lodes, has worked diligently to stabilize staffing ratios and patterns. Because of this effort, Waukesha Memorial has a very low vacancy rate—under 2%! To maintain this low vacancy rate, Waukesha Memorial has partnered with a local college. Waukesha Memorial works with their students, which gives them a fabulous pool of new graduates from which to hire. This program helps keep the RN work force stable, with very low turnover. Waukesha Memorial believes that this stable nursing force is one of the primary reasons for their high scores on physician satisfaction with nursing.

Waukesha Memorial also believes that their Nurse/Physician Communication Team contributes to their high levels of physician satisfaction with nursing and overall physician satisfaction. For the last 18 months, Waukesha Memorial has been using the Nurse/Physician Communication Team to work on physician concerns. One example has been the use of the SBAR Tool (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation). This tool helps support effective communication between nurses and physicians when there is a significant change in patient condition. In addition, the SBAR Tool helps nurses know when they need to call a physician, and to be better prepared when they do call a physician. This tool has resulted in fewer ‘unnecessary’ or ‘frustrating’ calls to physicians, which contributes to higher physician satisfaction with nursing at Waukesha Memorial.

Waukesha Memorial strongly believes that having an atmosphere of openness and trust between administration and medical staff is the primary contributor to physician satisfaction. This atmosphere has been built over many years of honesty and feedback, and continues to be supported through quick response to physicians. In addition, the administration regularly attends physician education events as an opportunity for additional communication and to further solidify their commitment to the medical staff. In order to support physician satisfaction with nursing, Waukesha Memorial has also enlisted the help for the Chief Nursing Executive, to maintain a stable RN force and low vacancy rate. A Nurse/Physician Communication Team has also been developed

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to facilitate communication between physicians and nurses, and to target any difficulties between the nursing staff and the medical staff.

### **Bringing It All Together**

Dr. Gardner believes that an atmosphere of openness and trust, quick response to physicians, continuing education of physicians, and coordination with nursing staff are all major contributors to the high level of satisfaction at Waukesha Memorial. The programs outlined in this Success Story, in addition to the atmosphere of openness and trust, have created an environment for high physician satisfaction with nursing and high physician satisfaction overall. Congratulations to Waukesha Memorial — a Top Performer in Physician Satisfaction!