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# **Improving the Patient Experience in Rural Hospitals**

# What We Will Talk About Today

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- Who am I?
- What is Patient Experience
- Why does it matter?
- Foundational Tools for Success
- Measurement
  - Surveying/example
  - Focus Groups
  - Patient advisory council
- What are the ways to successfully implement a culture of service excellence
  - Accountability/ SMART goals
  - Recognition
  - Best practices/tactics
- Example of outcomes/success
- Costs
- Input/Questions??

Who am I?

# Dawn Plested

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- Plested works as director of Patient Experience and Communications at First Light Health System, a general medical and surgical hospital in Mora, Minnesota.
- She is the Owner of Plested Company Healthcare Consulting specializing in marketing, strategic planning, market research, website design, branding patient experience initiatives.
- She serves on the [MHSCN board](#) as advisor for Central Minnesota.



What is “The Patient  
Experience”?

# What is Patient Experience?

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- A distinction is sometimes made between measuring a patient's experience vs. their satisfaction
- Patient's rating of their care experience is based on what they did or did not experience in their interactions obtaining health care
- Patient satisfaction is based on patients' rating of the *perception* of the care they received
- Clearly what a patient experiences significantly influences their perception of their care
- So, experience + perception = "satisfaction"

# What do Patients Want?

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According to a 2004 Harris Poll, key factors that contribute to patient satisfaction in rank order are:

- That they are treated with dignity and respect
- That their providers listen carefully to their health concerns
- The provider is easy to talk to
- The provider takes their concerns seriously
- The provider is willing to spend enough time with them
- The provider truly cares about them

# Forces Behind The Patient Experience

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Quality:

The clinical outcome of a patient's experience: Do they get better or not?

# Forces Behind the Patient Experience

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Employee  
Engagement:

What employees  
feel about the  
organization  
impacts the  
patient experience

# Forces Behind the Patient Experience

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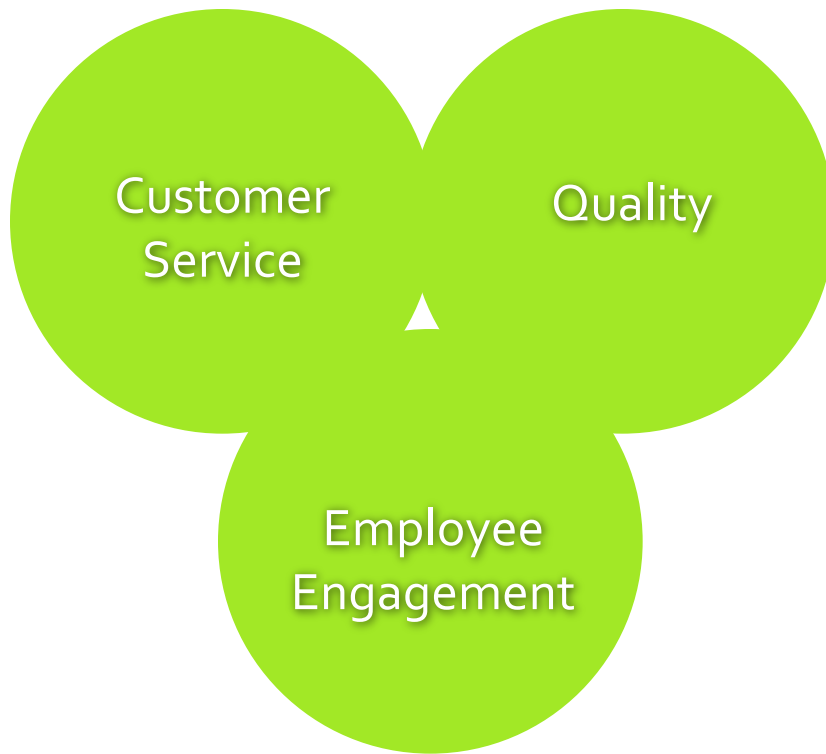


Customer  
Service

Customer Service:  
The patient's non-clinic experience with the hospital.

# Successful Organizations Create a Culture of Service Excellence

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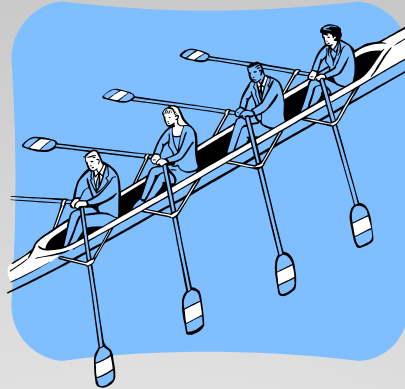


Non-clinical experience

Clinical experience

Employee perception

# Patient Experience Addresses Quality, Employee Engagement and Customer Service



Quality  
(Factual)  
What actually  
happened in  
the care  
process...  
What was the  
clinical  
quality/  
outcome

Employees  
(Emotional)  
How do the  
employees feel  
about their  
work/job

Service  
(Perception)  
How did the  
patient feel  
about what  
happened...  
How satisfied  
were they...

# *What is Unique to Patient Satisfaction/*Customer Satisfaction in healthcare

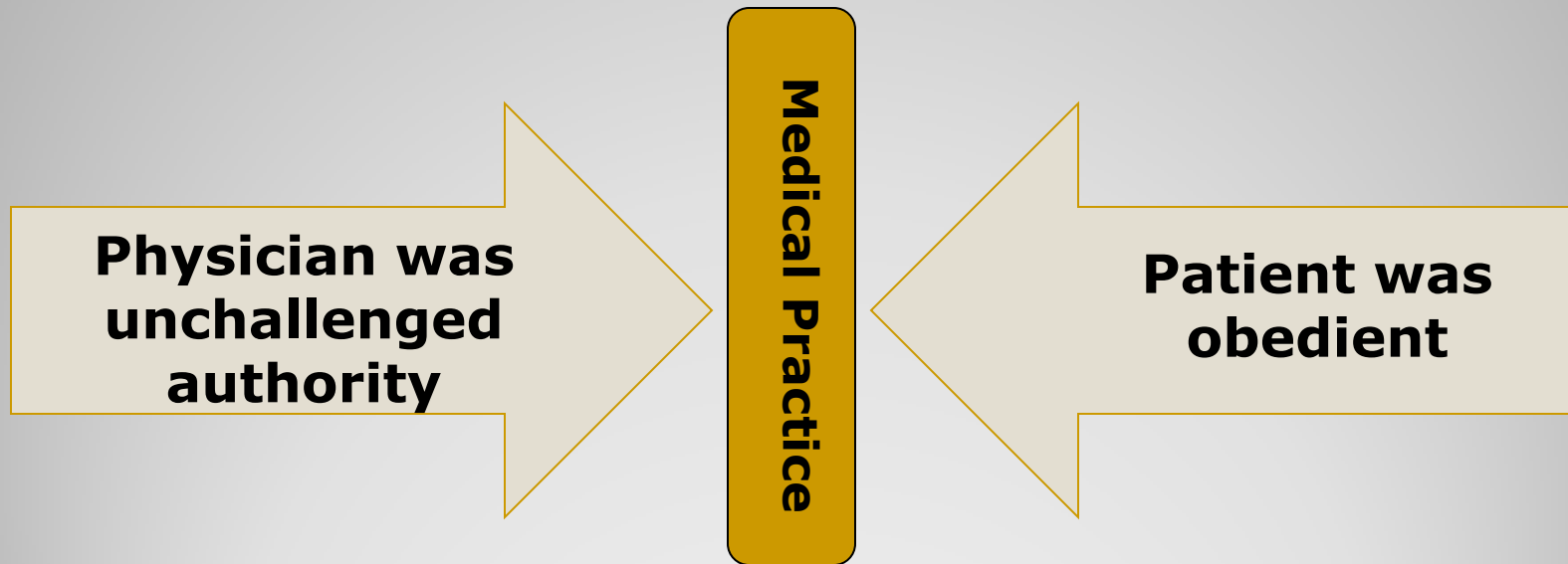
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- Often long-term duration of interaction
- Heightened emotional levels – anxiety, fear, pain
- Wide and increasing gap between technical competence and patient understanding
- Many people involved in a typical encounter: nurses, physicians, reception , specialists, etc.



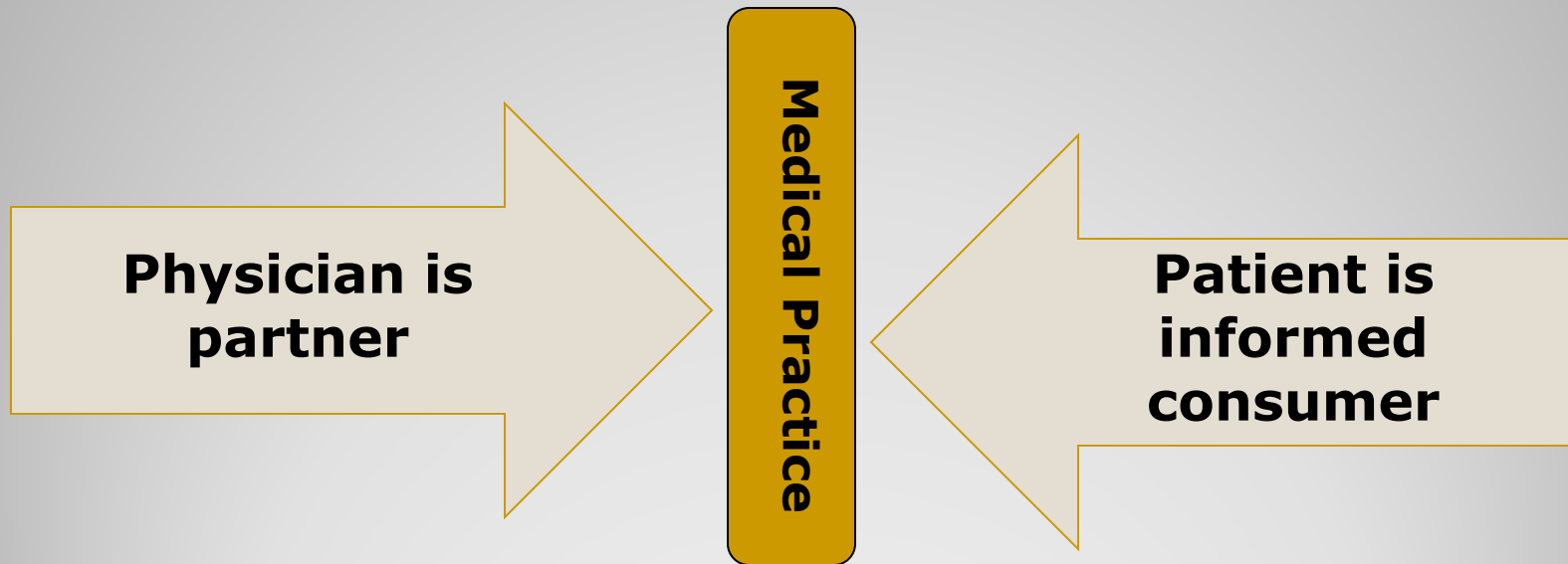
# Healthcare in the Past

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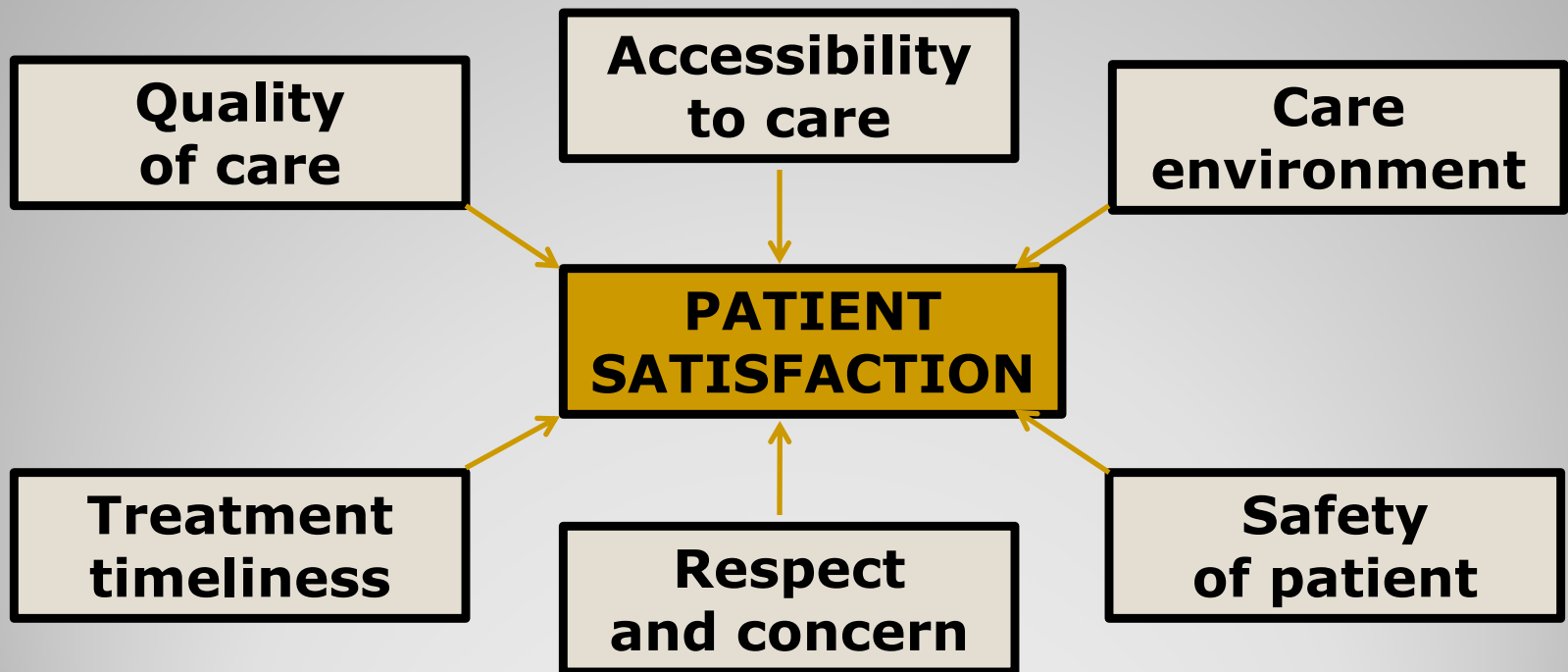


# Healthcare Today

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# Factors Influencing Patient Satisfaction



Why does it matter?

# Why is It Important?

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- It is why we are in the business we are in
- Healthcare organizations that are committed to the patient experience provide an exceptional employment experience= engaged employees
- Impacts Your reputation/brand/image
- Important for continuous quality improvement
- Public reporting and comparison on performance, such as HCAHPS and CAHPS
- Interest and incentives to improve patient experience
- Evidence suggests strong correlation between patient satisfaction and healthcare outcomes



# Patient Satisfaction Benefits

## Retention

- Satisfied patients are more likely to use your services in the future

## Future Visits

- It costs five times more to attract new patients than it does to maintain patient satisfaction with existing patients
- Imperative to invest in delivering exceptional service to your current patient base

## Referrals

- Loyal patients are eager to promote an exceptional patient experience, and thus fuel potential growth from new patients
- Unhappy patients tell (on average) 10 other people about an “underwhelming” service experience

# Foundational Tools for Success

# Keys to Patient Satisfaction

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- Leadership vision and commitment
- Understanding/agreement/consensus with management of all departments
- Measurement
- Continuous improvement process
- Employee engagement and empowerment
- Good communication
- Staff development and training
- Accountability
- Monitoring and feedback
- Recognition



# Measurement

- Talk with staff... brainstorm areas of improvement/importance for your department
- Talk with Patients... what matters to them in your department?
- Figure out what you want to measure and how you are going to measure it.
- Surveys designed to collect information about what is needed are different from surveys designed to measure goal achievement. Start with "What is needed"

**Measure the Important Things**

- Surveys should be short and easy to answer
- Tailored to your department
- Sent to the patient group you would like to select
- Sent to enough people to ensure a representative demographic
- They should not “lead” respondents
- They should be sent immediately after service or have them filled out while the patient is onsite.

## Survey Points

# Example Survey

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Dear Patient:

As the manager of [DEPARTMENT], I want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve you. Please help us serve you better by taking a couple of minutes to tell us about the service that you have received so far. We value you and your health and want to make sure we exceed your expectations.

Sincerely,

[MANAGER\_NAME]

**In your most recent [DEPARTMENT] experience, how did you contact the representative?**

- ☐ In Person
- ☐ By Telephone
- ☐ Internet
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ Other
- ☐

**How often do you use [DEPARTMENT]**

- Daily ☐ Once/week or more ☐ 2-3 times per month ☐ Once/month ☐ Every 2-3 months ☐ 2-3 times per year ☐

**Overall, how satisfied are you with [DEPARTMENT/SERVICE]?**

- Very Satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Neutral ☐ Unsatisfied ☐ Very Unsatisfied ☐

**My problem was solved?**

- Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐

**How likely are you to use this [DEPARTMENT/SERVICE/HOSPITAL] again?**

- Definitely ☐ Probably ☐ Might or might Not ☐ Probably Not ☐ Definitely Not ☐

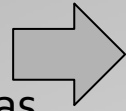
**Would you recommend this [DEPARTMENT/SERVICE/HOSPITAL] to others?**

- Definitely ☐ Probably ☐ Might or might Not ☐ Probably Not ☐ Definitely Not ☐

**Do you have any recommendations for the improvement of your experience at [DEPARTMENT]?**

# Our Process

*Integrate current data:*  
HCAHPS and CGCAPS as  
well as any other currently  
collected data.



Planning  
Sessions



Consumer  
Survey



Planning  
Sessions



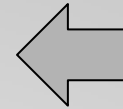
Consumer  
Focus Groups



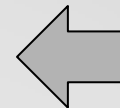
Planning  
Session



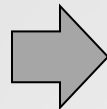
Recruit and Launch  
Patient Advisory  
Committee



*What did we learn?*  
How satisfied our patients  
currently are and what  
needs to be improved.



*What will we learn?*  
Why they feel the way  
they do and if they  
like our ideas for  
improvement.



*What will we learn?*  
How to continuously  
improve satisfaction.

What are the Ways to  
Successfully Implement a  
Culture of Service  
Excellence?

# Nine Principles – A Culture of “Always”



**Commit to Excellence**



**Build Individual Accountability**



**Measure the Important Things**



**Align Behaviors with Goals and Values**



**Build a Culture Around Service**



**Communicate at All Levels**



**Create and Develop Great Leaders**



**Recognize and Reward Success**



**Focus on Employee Satisfaction**



The interaction between all members of your organization and patients reinforces the **emotional** and **psychological** relationship you have with your communities and patients.

# How to Set Goals for Yourself and Your Department: S.M.A.R.T. Goals

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**S**

**Specific**

**M**

**Measurable**

**A**

**Attainable**

**R**

**Realistic**

**T**

**Timely**

**Specific:** A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you must answer the six "W" questions:

- \*Who: Who is involved?
- \*What: What do I want to accomplish?
- \*Where: Identify a location.
- \*When: Establish a time frame.
- \*Which: Identify requirements and constraints.
- \*Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

EXAMPLE: A general goal would be, "Get in shape." But a specific goal would say, "Join a health club and workout 3 days a week."

## "Specific" Goals

**Measurable** - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set.

When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as.....

- How much? How many?
- How will I know when it is accomplished?

**"Measurable" Goals**

**Attainable** – When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You begin seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed far away and out of reach eventually move closer and become attainable, not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. When you list your goals you build your self-image. You see yourself as worthy of these goals, and develop the traits and personality that allow you to possess them.

**“Attainable” Goals**

**Realistic-** To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both *willing* and *able* to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress.

A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labor of love.

**“Realistic” Goals**

**Timely** – A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there's no sense of urgency. If you want to lose 10 lbs, when do you want to lose it by? "Someday" won't work. But if you anchor it within a timeframe, "by May 1st", then you've set your unconscious mind into motion to begin working on the goal.

Your goal is probably realistic if you truly *believe* that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past or ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.

**T** can also stand for Tangible – A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the senses, that is, taste, touch, smell, sight or hearing.

When your goal is tangible you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and thus attainable.

## "Timely" Goals

- Be sure to measure the goals for success and hold staff accountable for the goals they have set.
- REWARD success! Reward and Recognize outstanding service, hard work and dedication in your staff.

**Measurement and Reward**

# Best Practices: The basics.... Not always basic

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- Analyze for operational improvements as well as service opportunities.
- Hourly Rounding
- Leadership rounding
- Recognize
- Thank You Notes
- Employee Empowerment for service recovery
- Pre and Post Discharge Phone Calls
- Key Words at Key Times (drive home key messages)
- Communication
  - Do providers and staff listen to patients?
  - Do patients receive clear, correct information about their diagnosis, medication, care?
- Access to Care
  - How long do patients wait to see their provider?
  - Can patients access same-day or next-day appointments?
- Care Coordination
  - Is care quick and easy or confusing and delayed?
  - Do providers and care settings work together?

# Best Practices: The basics.... Not always basic

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- Remember, that patients **are** our job, they are not in the way of our job
- Smile... in person and while speaking on the phone
- Greet every patient with a friendly and warm tone... not just while performing your job, but in the halls and throughout the facility
- Look people in the eye
- Engage and be fully present with each patient
- Think of the needs of every person you encounter, every day
- Remember...we are here to serve
- Think of patients like your family
- Do what ever needs to be done to help that patient... go the extra mile
- Treat them how you would we want to be treated
- If you don't love your neighbor, treat them like you do
- **Listen**... don't wait to talk

# Best Practices

Foundation

Breakthrough

Leadership  
Buy-In

Department  
Level  
Participation

Must  
Haves

Moving to  
Next Level

Standardization

Accelerators

## How to begin

- ▼ Implement an organization-wide evaluation of organization's reputation and the patient perception of experience
- ▼ Create process to assist leaders in developing a clear vision of what is needed for department level success and goal setting

## Start implementing

- ▼ Staff Engagement
- ▼ Goals
- ▼ Accountability
- ▼ measurement

## Continuous Improvement

- ▼ Re-recruit high and middle performers
- ▼ Move low performers up or out
- ▼ Review
- ▼ Hold accountable
- ▼ Reward
- ▼ Patient advisory council

## Example of Outcomes/Success

## Comparable Results from March 2010 to Feb 2011- (Mora, PC & HC clinics)

- The courtesy of the reception area check in staff:

Excellent = 53.5%

Very Good = 31.6%

- The ease of making your last appointment:

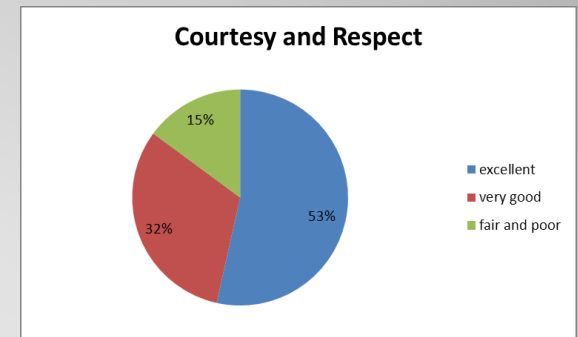
Excellent = 36.6%

Very Good = 35.5%

- The ease of registering at the clinic:

Excellent = 46.0%

Very Good = 35.6%



## Clinic Admitting: Where we were

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Nine in 10 clinic patients feel the clerks and receptionists at the clinic they most recently visited were helpful and treated them with courtesy and respect.

- Clerks and Receptionists treated you with courtesy and Respect

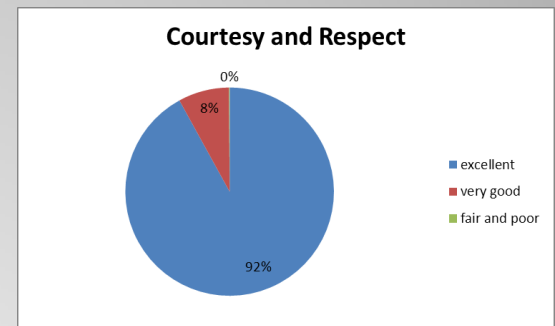
Excellent = 92.0%

Very Good = 8.0%

- Clerks and Receptionists Were Helpful

Excellent = 89.0%

Very Good = 10.0%



## Clinic Admitting: Where we are now

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**AN IMPROVEMENT  
OF 39% IN THE  
EXCELLENT CATEGORY  
OF COURTESY!**

**Contrast**

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- Customer Service presentation onboarding and engaging admitting staff
- Goal setting
- Measurement tool: phone system
- Ongoing Online Customer Service Education (required)
- Customer Service worksheets on a weekly/monthly basis which included everything from phone greetings to rating co-workers to listing opportunities.
- Provided scripting
- Weekly Customer Service Tip emails to staff x 3 months
- Customer Service Summer Challenge
- On-going customer service discussions at staff meetings, one-on-ones, and listening to phone calls.
- Recognition events
- Leading by example opportunities

## Tactics

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Costs

# Costs

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- Entirely tailored to size, scope and complexity of organization.
- Increasingly reimbursement is expected to be tied to patient satisfaction/ experience.

# Examples of Success

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Questions and Input?