

Emergency Department Pulse Report: Tips for ED Administrators

Over the years, the Emergency Department (ED) has become the front door of our nation's hospitals, now accounting for more than half of all hospital admissions in the United States. It is important for hospitals and urgent care facilities to take steps toward improving the ED experience and reduce time spent in the ED.

Press Ganey offers comprehensive measurement and improvement solutions to help hospitals improve the patient experience. The following are solutions some high-performing hospitals have utilized:

- **Monitor all patient feedback and collect satisfaction data.** Through Press Ganey, collecting real-time feedback from your patients helps administrators and staff members see the immediate impact and quality assessment of their services. Utilizing patient comments bring life to the scores. This insight is an indispensable tool to aid in customer service improvement and to identify areas of needed improvement. In addition, assure transparency with all emergency department scores—both overall patient satisfaction, as well as physician specific scores. By working as a team and utilizing this data, improvements may be focused and trended.
- **Work with your staff to improve patient communication.** Communication is absolutely critical to improving the patient experience. Many hospitals implement patient representatives or hospitality associates to execute customer services tasks such as greeting patients/families, providing information on wait times, updating family members on patient's progress, and supporting families in distress. Some large hospitals find patients appreciate the use of pagers, which allow patients and families the freedom to move about the hospital campus and immediate vicinity without being tied to the immediate waiting area.
- **Examine staff hiring, orientation, and ongoing communication procedures.** Do staff members truly understand and personify the hospital's uncompromising dedication to patient care? Clinical staff are the face and heart of the hospital, and all interactions with a patient should reflect the hospital's priorities. The professionalism of the staff reflects the competence of the institution as perceived by the patient. Hiring criterion should reflect the hospital priorities; some hospitals have implemented peer-interviewing to aid in this process. Many hospitals see improvement in a hospital's culture when the hospital's priorities are reinforced during every point of communication with all new and tenured staff.
- **Implement a Physician Extender Program.** Patients are seen in the order of severity, so patients with the least acute issues tend to have the longest waits. Some hospitals develop Physician Extender Programs that utilize physician assistants and nurses to coordinate care for patients who present with these more benign issues in the ED. This approach helps decrease door-to-clinician wait times and overall patient length-of-stay. Additionally this approach can help prevent patients from leaving without being seen.
- **Utilize patient feedback as motivation for improvement.** Reward and recognize staff and administrators for quality patient scores. This may also be used to hold individual physicians accountable. For example, a single ED physician with very poor scores can drag down the entire ED. Rewarding and recognizing physicians with great scores helps to reinforce patient-centered care, which should always be the priority.