

# East Texas Medical Center Tyler: Making True Patient Connections Through Rounding



## Who They Are

- A 464-bed hospital
- Serves as the flagship facility for the East Texas Medical Center
- The largest medical referral center in East Texas
- The only Level-1 designated trauma center in the region

### **A Message from Maria Kulma, DNP, RN, NEA-BC ETMC Tyler Vice President of Patient Services:**

*“For many years I have struggled with how to inspire and motivate nurses to look beyond the tasks and see the opportunity they have every day to touch someone’s life and in turn be touched. Could I change the way nursing care is delivered to shift the focus from task to touch?”*

*“I believe we are on to something at ETMC Tyler that will change our profession. This Press Ganey engagement has proven to be the stimulus to define the missing piece — the tipping point that changes our focus from tasks to people. It is about coaching nurses and nursing staff to use their time with patients wisely; to choose words and actions that create people connections, not opportunities to complete a task.”*

## Situation

ETMC Tyler leveraged important elements to providing patient care throughout the organization, including basic hourly rounding, bedside shift reports and whiteboard communications. Despite periods of excellence, however, overall ratings for patient satisfaction, patient experience and nurse communication were not meeting organizational goals for consistent, top-percentile performance.

## Hurdles

- Inconsistent hourly rounding practices between units
- Lack of clarity around behavior standards
- Consistent low-performing units
- Task-oriented focus versus emotional focus
- Lack of nurse manager involvement in verifying, validating and coaching hourly rounds

## How They Did It

ETMC Tyler partnered with the Press Ganey Strategic Consulting Group to support the implementation and sustainability of its new hourly rounding program using the Press Ganey Compassionate Connected Care Rounding framework. The Press Ganey approach to working with ETMC Tyler was based on a program designed for rapid implementation, leveraging training on key behaviors and providing coaching on how to effectively transfer and sustain those behaviors within the care environment.

- The new approach to rounding was implemented on three low-performing units.
- A Rapid Implementation Team (RIT) was formed consisting of a nurse manager and director from each unit, with the CNO serving as the executive sponsor.
- All RNs, PCAs and nurse leaders from each unit attended three hours of Press Ganey–led behavior training.
- Facilitated by the Press Ganey team, ETMC Tyler defined nonnegotiable standards of behavior focused on making emotional connections with patients.

### Key elements of the program include

- A focus on making a connection with the patient first, not on the task, score or HCAHPS
- Nurses who make a personal commitment to get to know patients beyond the primary diagnosis
- A focus on behavioral standards and nonnegotiable behaviors when communicating with patients and families and presenting a healing environment

Successful transformation of the patient experience requires recognizing that the caregiver-patient bond is more personal and more connected than any other service relationship. In addition to providing compassion and paths for healing, it is often necessary for caregivers to deliver difficult information and manage pain-causing interventions. Partnering with caregivers to deliver compassionate, connected care to help reduce patient suffering is the primary mission of Press Ganey’s Strategic Consulting Services team. Creating a culture of caregiver alignment around the patient, supported by an engaged and satisfied health-care workforce that embraces service excellence, is the foundation of Press Ganey’s approach. Implementation of this program at ETMC Tyler was followed by a 60-day post-project coaching and monitoring session to ensure sustainability of the improvements.

## Results

Ninety days post-implementation, ETMC Tyler’s top-box score for “Rate Hospital 0-10” on its patient experience surveys for trained units improved by 10 points. The enhanced rounding program promotes a patient-focused connection before the task-oriented elements of rounding are completed, and it has become the standard of care and a required competency for RNs and CNAs at ETMC Tyler. Based on the success of the program, the organization plans to expand the practice to additional inpatient units and services (namely, Laboratory and Respiratory).

- Nurse managers now provide real-time coaching and commit at least one hour per day to validating and verifying that behavior standards are met.
- Recognition is now tied to expected behaviors.