

Rewards and Recognition

Frontline Managers: A Case Study

Context

Mountain View Health (MVH) is a 125-bed acute care hospital that serves patients from the greater Seattle region of Washington state. A senior nurse manager, Rhonda, on one of the med-surgical units at MVH, noticed an uptick on the number of healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) in the months of November and December 2019.

Earlier in the summer of 2019, MVH leadership rolled-out a new strategic plan that included improving patient safety outcomes. One of the objectives stated in the plan is “to achieve and sustain zero central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSIs) on each med-surgical unit across MVH by April 2020.” As part of this strategic initiative, Clinical Leaders across the hospital were asked to identify and help implement quality improvement initiatives that could help the hospital reach its goal of zero CLABSIs.

Solution: “Zero Heroes”

In late December 2019, Rhonda and her team members including Dr. Edwards, two Registered Nurses, and an Infection Preventionist held their weekly meeting to discuss the bed census. Rhonda brought up the fact that the number of CLABSIs on their unit had increased and wanted to discuss potential solutions.

Rhonda’s team decided to implement an educational pilot program to see if they could improve clinicians’ and patients’ awareness about the seriousness of CLABSIs and the need to identify the warning signs of a potential CLABSI. After requesting the feedback of her peers, Rhonda learned that many clinicians were not willing to engage in the educational program, citing factors such as, “I feel really underappreciated at my job” and “I don’t think hospital leadership recognizes how hard it is to manage all of the different patients with central lines.”

In presenting these comments back to her team, Rhonda proposed the unit pivot from its planned education intervention and come up with a new recognition program that acknowledges individual clinicians: “Zero Heroes.” Rhonda outlined the key functions of this recognition program from both a unit and patient perspective:

- Have clinicians informally nominate team members each week who have stepped up to assist another person in changing or removing a central line when medically necessary.
- At the end of each quarter, celebrate the individual who has received the most nominations and offer them a \$50 gift card to the hospital coffee shop. This person would be the Zero Hero for the quarter.
- Engage patients and have them identify specific care team members who went above and beyond to ensure they had a safe and comfortable stay.
- Have patients hand write a “thank you” note to the care team member and ask if they would want to share this note privately with the care team member or post it in the hallway.

Program effectiveness

Two months after introducing Zero Heroes, Rhonda received over 25 nominations. She had to order a new bulletin board to have enough space to post the patient thank you cards.

Team members also started to gather around the bulletin board each week to see who received the most thank you cards.

At the quarterly MVH Leadership Meeting in April 2020, Rhonda was asked to present a progress report on her unit's CLABSI reduction efforts. She reveals that her unit has been CLABSI-free for 7 consecutive weeks and explains how these results coincide with the introduction of the Zero Heroes program.

After sharing specific examples of patient thank you cards, MVH Leadership voted unanimously to implement Zero Heroes across the med-surgical units at MVH.

Discussion

What important aspects of a rewards and recognition program did Rhonda consider?

How did these considerations contribute to the success of the Zero Heroes program?

What other design elements could Rhonda have considered for the Zero Heroes program?

Additional comments
