

PROJECT TITLE: Using a tool/checklist to help increase patient engagement and improve HCAHPS scores

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The Problem:

Less than optimal patient satisfaction scores is one of the issues that continue to plague the healthcare system. With the extensive training that medical doctors receive, they are properly equipped with knowledge. It is therefore arguable that the magnitude and complexity of information today undermines the ability of doctors to properly communicate that knowledge to their patients. Patients need to have the power to ask questions and prompt doctors to give them more information. In his book, *The Checklist Manifesto*, Atul Gawande makes a compelling argument that we can do better, using the simplest of methods: a checklist.

Project Goals:

Our goal is to study if empowering and engaging patients make them better recipients of information from doctors. Our hypothesis is that a checklist with daily questions for the patient to ask their doctor would empower them to become collaborators in care and better retain information.

In this project, we set out to improve the overall patient experience during the acute care episode over a six month period using the metrics below as indicators:

- Improve overall Doctor Communication domain by 5%
- Improve HCAHPS subdomain Clear Communication by Doctors by 5%
- Have a 75% reach in distributing the checklist/tool to patients on project unit
- Observe a positive correlation between clear communication by doctors and clear communication by nurses ($r > 0.5$)

Actions Taken:

- We analyzed HCAHPS scores on units where hospitalist round to determine the poorest performing units.
- We developed a tool/checklist of questions for patients to ask the doctor and printed on card stock (*See Figure 1*)
- The following inclusion criteria was applied for the study group:
 - Patients must be on unit 4D
 - Patients must be assigned to the hospitalist
- We educated and engaged the sound hospitalist, unit 4D nurses and other ancillary staff about the tool
- The HRN rounded on all new patients daily and gave the tool and a pencil for note taking
- To control for human behavior as an extraneous variable, we made the hospitalist rotate rounding on 4D
- Hospitalist specific HCAHPS scores were ran monthly then quarterly for the duration of the project

Results:

Baseline: April – September 2017

Comparison: October 2016 – March 2017

Data Source: HACHPS Survey - Healthstream Research Insights Database

Focus Population: 4D Hospitalist patients


- In the comparison group there was a 21% increase in HCAHPS Overall Doctor Communication top box scores (59% vs. 81%, $p=0.00$). (See *Graph 1*)
- There was a 25.7% increase in the HCAHPS subdomain Clear Communication by doctor for the comparison group (56% vs. 82%, $p=0.001$). (See *Graph 2*)
- For the project duration, we had a 67% reach in distributing the tool/checklist to patients.
- For those that took the HCAHPS survey during the project, higher scores in clear communication by doctors was positively correlated to clear communication by nurses ($r =0.672$). (See *Table 1*)

Lessons Learned:

- Giving patients a standardized and structured way to obtain information on a daily basis from their physician led to an increase in HCAHPS scores for both doctor and nursing communication.
- Nursing and physician communication scores are correlated and efforts to improve physician communication should include nurses.
- Patients acted upon the checklist better when it was indicated that it was meant to empower them to drive their care.
- Traditionally, patients participate in patient experience initiatives through feedback. This tool provides an opportunity for them to drive the communication piece of their experience.
- This project was HRN driven, therefore limited to when the individual was working.
- I recommend piloting this checklist/tool at more sound sites.
- Additionally, I recommend further studying the application of a more personalized tool that can be shared with the patient in an electronic format.

Figure 1: Tool Created for Patients

Daily questions to ask my doctor



Who are my doctors today? _____

What illness led to my hospitalization and how will this affect my long term health and well being? _____

What is my treatment and how is my condition responding to it? _____

What is the care plan to further understand my illness and to make me better?

Bloodwork: New Results New Tests

Imaging studies: New Results New Tests

Medications: New Old

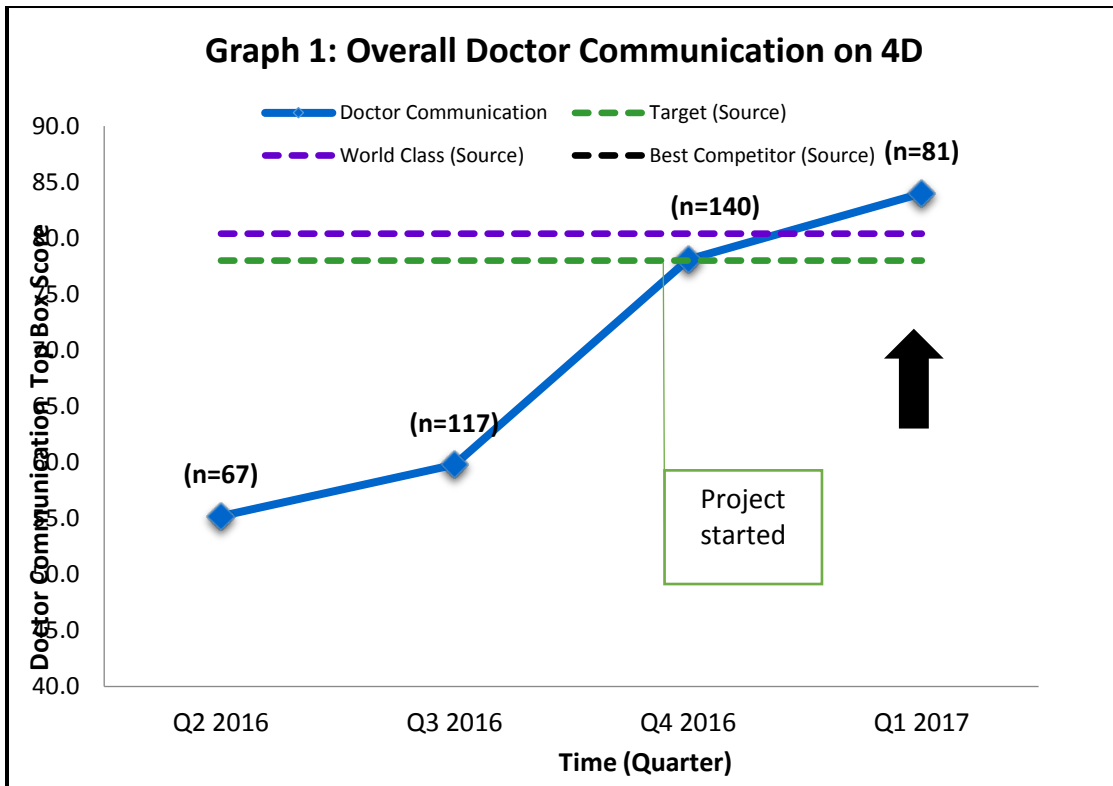
How is my care team making me better and what can I do to help? _____

When do you anticipate my discharge from the hospital and will I be able to go home? _____

What plans on discharge will improve my well-being and help me stay out of the hospital?

Home Health Rehab Nursing Home Other

Additional questions _____



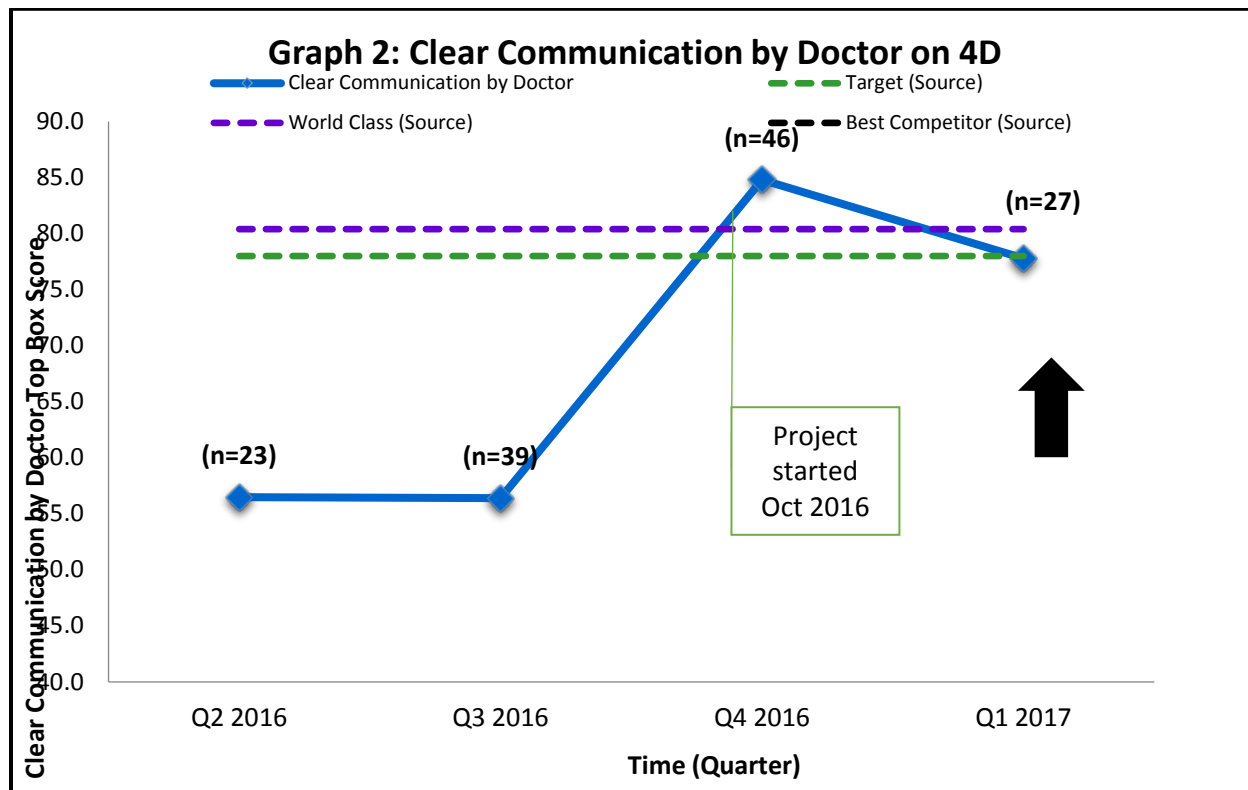


Table 1: Correlation between Nurse and Doctor Communication Scores

	Clear Communication by nurses (%)	Clear Communication by doctors (%)
Q4 2016	81.3	83.3
Q1 2017	76	77.8