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Report from the Patient Advisor

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Health Sciences North
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In health care, delivering quality patient care is a team effort, from the bedside to the boardroom. Everyone from the nurse to housekeeping to the CEO has a role to play in making sure our patients receive the best care possible. Patients also have an essential role to play in that process.

The role of Patient and Family Advisors continues to grow at Health Sciences North. Over the last five years, the number of advisors has tripled. There are nearly 40 advisors who serve on various HSN committees and projects, who volunteer and offer advice and guidance to staff, to try to continuously improve the patient experience. That number shows you that HSN is committed to seeing the operation of the hospital through the eyes of the patient.

I was inspired to become a Patient and Family Advisor a few years ago after going through two surgeries here at HSN. After the second surgery, I felt the level of care I received was greatly reduced. I saw an ad in the paper stating the hospital was looking for patient advisors, and I jumped at the opportunity. I'm glad I did.

As Patient and Family Advisors, we partner with staff to provide direct input on policies, programs and practices which affect the patient experience. We also share our care experiences, whether they be positive or negative, as a way to address gaps in the system and improve upon them for future patients and families.

Patient and Family Advisors are involved in many improvement projects across the hospital. For example, improving the flow of hip fracture patients within HSN and the community. The patient voice, with lived experience, helped ground the team and reflect on what is important to patients throughout their care journey.

We focused on the education and resource components to help with enhanced communication.

This year, HSN has seen much progress on the number of Alternative Level of Care (ALC) patients. In 2017, the HSN ALC Prevention Working Group was established, and included four Patient Advisors who continue to provide advice on how to enhance the conversations with patients and families upon admission.

Patient insights and input have contributed to how HSN works with families to establish a discharge plan for the ALC patient, while highlighting where patients can get the services they need elsewhere in the community. Patient Advisors identified communication gaps between patients, their families, and the medical staff. There was confusion around the services that were available outside the hospital. Our Advisors were able to improve communication between ALC patients and their families, so they were able to access the right care, when they needed it. That meant fewer hospital re-admissions for acute care patients, and less congestion on our floors.

One of the advisors who was involved with ALC improvement work was Charles Ketter, who was praised for his insights and efforts on this issue. Karrie Attamanchuk, an ALC Quality Specialist at HSN, said *"Charles offered invaluable insights. His experience helped focus the conversation on how to make improvements to the process as patient focused as possible and timely to ensure the next patient requiring the right bed got there at the right time. He offered great suggestions that*

could be easily implemented as well as some long term solutions that would help. Having a voice for the patients really helped ground the team and in doing so we have had some great success with the changes the team has made.

Advisors have also been working at breaking down communication barriers between patients and medical staff when it comes to Advanced Care Planning or ACP, as some units refer to it. ACP is when a patient may need to share their wishes on future health care plans with their care team and substitute decision maker, in the event they may not be able to speak for themselves.

Patients need to name the person they have shared their care wishes with, someone who can speak for them. In the past, we heard from patients and families that this process lacked empathy. Our Advisors got involved and suggested that we “normalize” the conversation in the most compassionate and caring manner possible. Education material that is available to patients and families now incorporates a more mindful approach and useful tools for families to make those sensitive conversations easier. Patient engagement with this work garnered praise from Traci Franklin, Clinical Manager of Supportive Care. She said “*our patient advisor brought a unique perspective that many of the health care workers would not have considered. It truly influenced the work to ensure that it was patient centred.*”

Patient Advisors are also involved in high level operations of the hospital. This past year, they served on hiring committees for the President and CEO, the Chief of Staff, the Senior Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer and the Vice-President and Chief Nursing Executive. Having a patient voice on those hiring boards is important because we get to hear a candidate’s vision for the hospital and make sure that vision aligns with HSN’s patient care improvement goals.

As HSN moves forward in its journey to the 2019 Accreditation, and achieving the highest standards in quality and safety, Patient Advisors look forward to working with HSN Staff and Senior Leadership to ensure that the patient lens is integrated in our approach to deliver the very best in patient care.

Thank you for inviting me to share the Patient Report this year.

Let me conclude by acknowledging members of the Patient and Family Advisory Council who served this past year:

Julie-Anne Bergeron
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Bonnie Dittrich
John Fraser
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Jessica Grenier
Melanie Kanerva
Paulette Lalancette
Sandy MacDonald
Brenda Merrick
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Carole Talevi