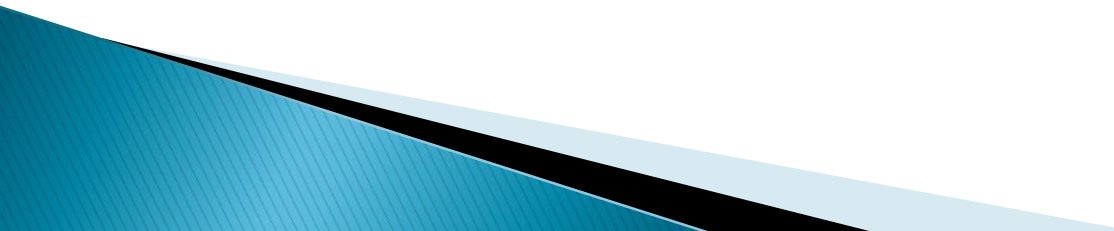# Engaging frontline caregivers as a mechanism to identify and resolve safety issues

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Learning Objectives

- Defined patient safety culture
- Identify the Main components of a safety culture
- Explain Patients safety where it begins
- Discuss how can leaders create a culture of safety
- Identify the concept of employee engagement
- Explain how caregiver Engagement Improves Safety
- Describe How we can engage caregivers
- Highlight the strategies can be used to build employee engagement
- Conclusion

Patient Safety: Whose Responsibility Is It?

"There simply is nothing more important in overseeing a hospital or other health care facility than ensuring it is as safe as possible for patients." Improving patient safety should be among the highest priorities of health care leaders and managers.

Dr. Kenneth Kizer

National Quality Forum

Director of the Institute for Population Health Improvement

University of California – USA

Patient Safety Culture

Patient safety culture has been defined as :
"the values shared among organization members about what is important, their beliefs about how things operate in the organization, and the interaction of these with work unit and organizational structures and systems, which together produce behavioral norms in the organization that promote safety"

(Singer, et al (2009).

main components of a safety culture

1. just culture : is a culture of trust, a culture in which what is acceptable and not acceptable is defined, and fairness and accountability are critical components

2. reporting culture : encourages and facilitates the reporting of errors and safety issues, and commits to fixing what is broken

3. learning culture : is one that learns from errors, near misses, and other identified safety issues
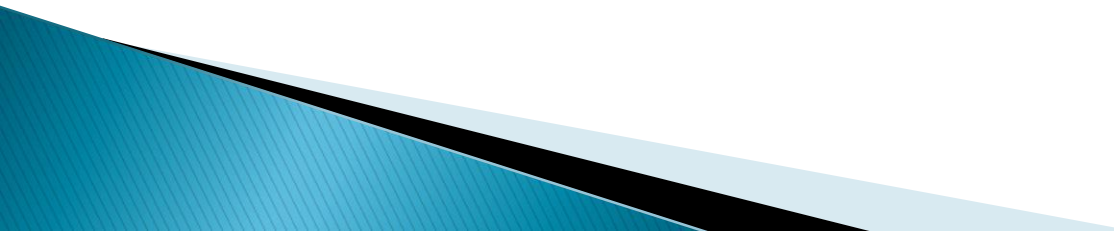
PATIENT SAFETY

The three components are **intertwined** – without a just culture, you have minimal reporting; without reporting, you have no opportunities to learn and improve.

Patient safety where it begins ?

Improving patient safety begins at the highest level of the organization with a transformational leadership style, which leads to the creation of a culture of safety, the adoption of patient safety initiatives, and ultimately, to improved patient safety outcomes
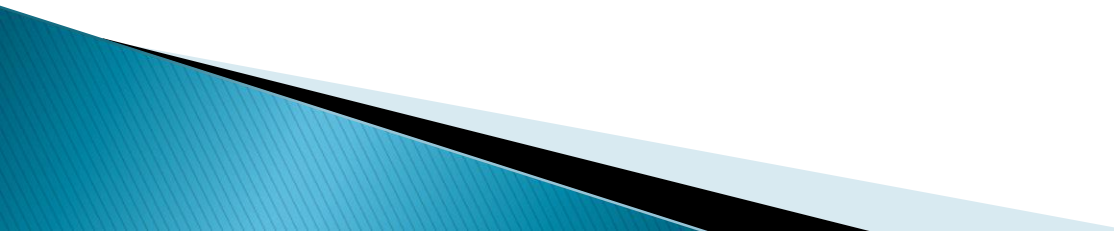
The effect of culture of safety on Patient safety

- It influences patient safety **directly** by determining accepted **practices**
- It influences **indirectly** by acting as a **barrier or enabler** to the adoption of **behaviours** that promote patient safety.

EFFECT

How can leaders create a culture of safety ?

1. Build psychological safety
- **The ability** of caregivers to raise safety issues **is an essential** component of safe care
- Creating an environment where **no one hesitant to voice a concern about patient or anything that puts organization at risk**
- Speaking up **should not** be associated with being perceived as **ignorant, incompetent, critical or disruptive**
- **Leaders** need to continuously **reinforce** the cultural values of the organization

2. Measures and understand the safety culture

- measure the understand safety culture in **all levels** of employee
- Use of **surveys** and produces data about important safety issues which can be debriefed and act on
- Units where caregivers have very positive perceptions of psychological safety , teamwork and leadership and feel comfortable discussing errors, **provide safer care environment**
- Consistent teamwork behaviors is also powerful mechanism to improving safety

3. Support organizational fairness

- Make it safe for members of the team **to discuss errors and near misses** so that the organization develops a strong learning culture
- Caregivers know they are accountable for being capable to do tasks safely and **not engaging** in unsafe behavior
- Caregivers know they are **not held** accountable for **system failures**

4. Developing a learning system

- **Leaders** can profoundly influence a culture of safety through their support of a learning system
- System to captures any concerns from frontline caregivers and demonstrates that leadership **is interested** in these issues
- Based on the information **Act** and when issues resolved , a **feedback** to be given to staff who gave the information

5. Engaging frontline caregivers

- The creation of a positive safety culture requires **frontline caregiver participation** in the setting of patient safety and organizational objectives
- Employees in modern organizations are expected to be **active** at work place, show initiative, and take responsibility for their own professional development and to be committed to high quality performance standards
- Engaging Frontline caregivers is **important** to improve hospital performance

The concept of employee engagement

- **Employee Engagement** defined as; "The extents to which employees thrive at work, are committed to their employer, and are motivated to do their best, for the benefit of themselves and their organization (Stairs, et al (2006)

caregiver Engagement Improves Safety

some of the benefits of engaged employees include:

- fewer general safety incidents
- fewer patient safety incidents
- decrease in absenteeism
- decrease in turnover
- increase in productivity
- improved profitability

BENEFiTS

Example on lack of engagement can be costly

- average cost of a safety incident in US for an engaged employee is **$63 versus $392** for a disengaged employee
- According to Journal of Patient Safety preventable medical errors are now the third leading cause of death in the U.S., behind only heart disease and cancer. In addition, more than 10,000 serious complications are also attributed to medical errors and are estimated to cost the U.S. $1 trillion dollars annually.

Harter, J. et al (2009)

Engage caregivers (Physicians, Nurses, and other Staff)

In order to reduce waste, hospitals will need to engage caregivers as they play a **critical role** in every aspect of healthcare.

Engagement means moving beyond the mindset of involvement or **"do as you're told to do"** to engaging employees to **"help us create a culture of safety excellence."**

employee engagement is defined as the **emotional commitment** the employee has to the organization and its goals

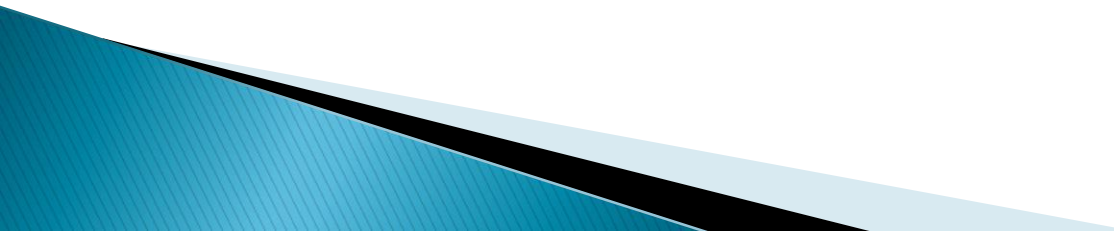# strategies can be used to build employee engagement

1. Create and consistently communicate a safety vision

- demonstrate care and concern for employees.
- humanizing safety by creating and communicating a safety vision statement.
- A safety vision statement must communicate both the purpose and values of the organization
- motivate employees to do their best when it comes to patient and workplace safety

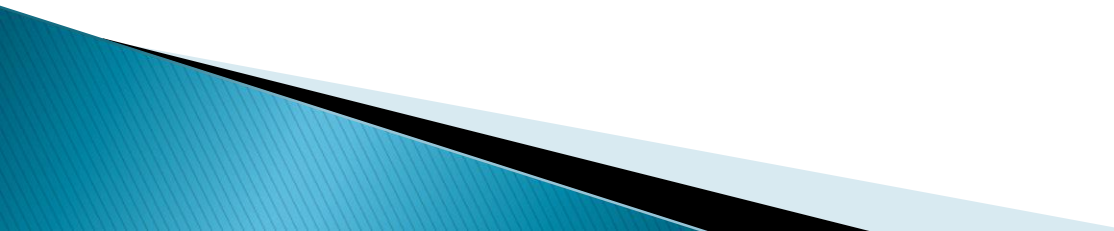2. Ensure employees have a sense of feeling valued and involved

- One of the **strongest** drivers of employee engagement is ensuring employees have **a sense** of feeling valued and involved
- Once concerns or ideas are received, management must **act rapidly** on the information provided.
- It is also important that the employee making the suggestion receives **timely feedback**, even if the answer is **"sorry, we can't do that and here's why."**
- When timely action is taken by management and two-way communication occurs, employees not only feel heard but they start to understand that the organization truly **appreciates and values their involvement and contributions**.

3. identify a Common Purpose

The common purpose of caregivers is patient care and improves his safety and this must be the primary focus of everything done at hospitals or facilities or anywhere that engages caregivers

4. identify a Common Purpose

Caregivers should be treated as partners with the hospital, not customers of it. Accordingly hospitals can ensure better care for patients, which is the key focus of clinicians anyway

5. Segment the Engagement Plan

- Identify and activate **champions**.
Don't overlook participants who may not have a senior title

- many clinicians who aren't department chairs or in any type of management role still hold a position **of influence** within the hospital community

6. Provide support and education

- The development of caregivers engagement skills can be provided by **support and education**; and not only for them, but for the rest of the staff as well.
- Healthcare provider **does not** work well in an environment when there is a **lack of understanding** to the strategy and purpose of the initiative.

Empowerment THROUGH **Education**

7. Engage caregivers intellect

- Help caregivers to **understand** why the changes are taking place.
- Allow them to **review** improvement ideas or **tests** of change.
- **Showing** them how they fit in to the process and why they are important to the success of the initiative **will increase the level of engagement and support**

8. Build trust

- **Building trust** is the most **important piece** of the process.
- **Communicate** often and candidly.
- Address concerns and issues in a timely and obvious manner.
- Identify and overcome **barriers** to engagement.
- The administration and leadership within the organization must be **very responsive**.

9. Show courage

Sometimes caregivers don't feel it's really safe to change due to doubts of the commitment and support of senior leadership or lack of proper resources. It is important for them to understand that their requests for resources are important and they must have the courage to ask, especially if the request is in the best interest of the patient.

10 . Involve employees in decision making

- Involving employees with safety committees, teams or problem-solving groups can provide **opportunities for participation**,
- if the groups or activities **don't offer** meaningful involvement, they can actually **create disengagement**.
- Employees are in a unique position to **not only identify barriers** to working safe, but they are also ideally positioned to **identify solutions.**
- When employees are able to participate in decision making, they gain a sense of **trust**, **ownership** and **pride**.
- employees are more likely to **support changes** in which they have had a **say** in the **decision making**.

DECISION MAKING

11. Adopt an Engaging Style

- Caregivers want to be involved from the **very beginning**.

- Ask them how patient care can be improved **will allow** for fewer mistakes, reduce waste, and provide patients the right care at the right time in the right place.

- Choose the **messages and messengers carefully** to ensure the message is delivered in a **positive manner** that appeals to Caregivers and encourages engagement.

12. Focus on recognizing effort

- If your organization practices an "ignore/busted" strategy, you may be ensuring a surface level of safety compliance yet not actually engaging employees

What is the "ignore/busted" strategy?

It occurs when managers do not acknowledge when employees are working safely but then immediately "bust" the first employee doing something wrong. This strategy may change behavior, but typically, only as long as the employee is being observed.

13. Focus on recognizing effort

- Punishment and negative reinforcement may result in temporary compliance, but it will not drive the emotional commitment necessary to engage employees with your safety process.

- Safety recognition is beneficial because it rewards employee efforts to work safely and helps infuse those behaviors into the culture.

- Managers and employees begin to learn from each other, and as a whole, the organization can learn what behaviors are most valued.
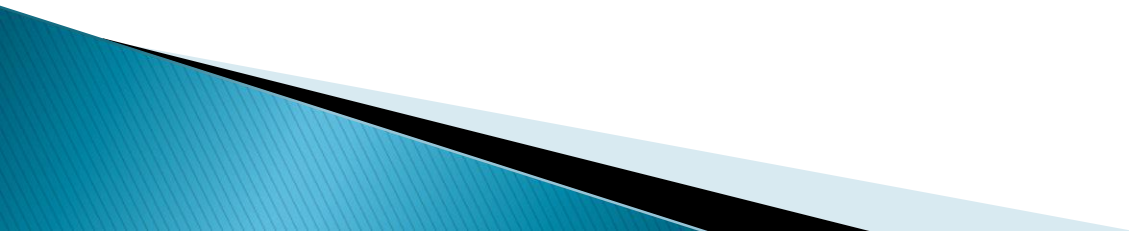
Conclusion

Not only are caregivers responsible for providing safe patient care, leaders are also responsible for creating an environment in which others can provide safe patient care. Having a deep understanding of patient safety and patient safety culture allows caregivers to be the leaders we need to be in ensuring that our patients are always safe

Driving employee engagement can be fun and challenging Organizations with high employee engagement have an advantage that many others lack.

employee engagement can kick organization safety process into high gear and set the stage for continuous safety improvement.

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