Cornerstone Health Care
High Point, N.C.

Cornerstone Health Care is a physician-owned and managed medical practice group of 325 physicians and mid-level health professionals representing a wide range of specialties. We have over 75 locations throughout North Carolina and continue to grow.

We started with a lofty goal: to transform our culture from an average or ‘regular’ practice to an exceptional one with the highest quality of patient care. Unsuccessful in past attempts, a more concentrated and sculpted approach needed to be pursued to ensure success. Beginning a relationship with Press Ganey was our first step. In order to achieve rapid improvement in the patient experience, we focused on six month intervals of time. In the first six months, we sent 12 months of surveys, to establish a baseline. After the baseline data gathering, we utilized the following six months to review the data and put improvements into place while simultaneously educating and cultivating a culture of service.

During our six month development and implementation period, we hand-picked a multi-career group of Cornerstone Ambassadors to serve on a team as change agents, communicators, and focus groups to direct and guide our current culture towards the culture of excellence that our patient’s deserved. This team, appropriately titled PEAK (Patient Expectations Are Key), began working with a dynamic performance coach who addressed our entire staff on the importance of our mission, vision, and values, emphasizing world-class service, the nobility of a healthcare professional and the critical nature that the patient experience plays in the success of a medical practice. To quote NASA flight director Gene Kranz, “Failure is not an option.” With the Summit Award as our final target, our interim goal was to see an increase in rank of 10 percentile points in our survey scores within the next reporting period.

As a result of our focused effort our action plan for improvement yielded impressive results. From our baseline measurement of the 76th percentile we have ascended to the 87th percentile, concluding our second survey period. With these encouraging results, we set our goal for the next six months to reach the first base camp of the Summit, overall facility ranking in the 95th percentile to be maintained for three years.

The PEAK Ambassadors team appointed a Physician Champion to captain the team and be the spokesperson to our providers. He set out to share his experience as a busy OB/GYN Physician having realized the result of his complacency when he learned that although friendly and well-liked, his surveys told another story. He took the challenge and soon saw his scores rapidly improve. Through sharing his story, passion for exceptional service and strong results, he continues to acquire the confidence and buy in of those once skeptical providers. With follow-up coaching, additional education, Press Ganey Solutions Starters and overall empowerment for change, we saw palpable differences in the way our providers were practicing medicine and managing their patients. We began to receive letters and emails of praise from our patients and a community buzz was in the air that something different and wonderful was taking place at Cornerstone.

The Press Ganey data played a vital role in helping us understand how our patients perceived their experience and guided us in our action plan development. Our relationship with the Press Ganey Improvement staff was and is extremely valuable in the development of our plans. We were able to look at each provider and each practice to get a comprehensive view of what our patients were telling us and then work on improvement solutions. Our Divisions Operations Director and Organization Excellence Developer teamed up with each practice and worked diligently with them on these improvements. Practice site observations with immediate feedback and site staff meetings along with examining their Press Ganey data helped make a great impact on their successes.

Concurrently, new programs, processes and procedures were developed as part of our new foundation for a service culture. A Professional Excellence training team is facilitating a newly designed orientation to include exciting pieces on customer service training. Key service indicators were built into staff job descriptions.
Communications are going out monthly to all staff to provide them with patient WOW stories, score updates and constant reminders of our goals. Scripting was implemented in our phone messaging and when greeting patients. Staff began to round in the patient lounge to inform about delays. New name badges were distributed that have a prominent first name displayed more conspicuously on the shoulder. A Service Recovery note was placed in our practice management system to present patients on their next visit with stellar service. Thank you cards and appointment cards were created for each practice to order and use for their patients. A company-wide screen saver was defaulted to everyone’s computer that reads “Every Patient, Every Time”. Mentoring programs were implemented for our practice managers and mid-level providers. Check-in processes were reviewed and unnecessary steps eliminated. An incentive bonus was given to those practices that exceeded their goal for patient satisfaction at the end of our last reporting period (March 30, 2012). All of this could not have happened without the commitment of our Press Ganey Team, our PEAK Ambassadors, and our every patient, every time approach.

It is said that on a trip from the earth to the moon that the spacecraft is actually off course over 90% of the time, but because of constant readjustments to the flight plan, the ship hits the target. Utilizing Press Ganey, we have been able to make frequent adjustments to our action plan and achieve our interim goal of the 87th percentile, an 11 point improvement.

As we move forward with our plans to achieve the triple aim, the patient experience is playing a key role in our decision making. We understand that the challenges become greater as one begins to reach the summit of the journey and we are driven to create a great patient experience for “Every Patient, Every Time”.

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