Patient Engagement: A Seat at the HCA Table

The Challenge

Patient Engagement is essential to building and maintaining a transformed medical home, yet the means for encouraging and achieving Patient Engagement at a practice/institutional level remain unclear.

The Goals

- To convene a diverse group of patients to serve as Advisors to HCA
- To compel HCA to bring the patient perspective into plans and policies
- To create meaningful Advisor roles that bring the patient voice and perspective into daily HCA practices

The Team

Healthcare Associates (HCA), a primary care practice serving over 40,000 patients, convened a Patient Family Advisory Council (PFAC). Clinicians identified thoughtful patients. Patients were interviewed individually and in groups, assisted by BIDMC’s Department of Social Work. Nine Advisors attend quarterly meetings and participate in many HCA projects.

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<tr>
<th>HCA PATIENT/FAMILY ADVISORY COUNCIL*</th>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Altman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephanie Bernier</td>
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<td>Russell Williams</td>
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<td>Robert Krebs</td>
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<td>Ligia Pineros</td>
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<td>Tobie Atlas</td>
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<td>Miriam Vayle</td>
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<td>Mikaelah Houston</td>
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<td>Raymond Jordan</td>
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*Leonor Fernandez, MD, Director of Patient Engagement at HCA; Jake Decker, MD, Resident Liaison

PFAC Initiatives and Actions

- **Focus on communication:** assessed HCA’s online portal for patients, PatientSite; addressed waiting room dynamics and interactions with staff and call center
- **Contribute to written and media communications:** helped produce a training video on Ebola, a Diabetes Patient Manual, HCA’s Welcome Packet, and Breast Cancer Screening posters
- **Incorporate patient and family perspectives:** attend weekly Operations Meeting, serve on Transformation Committee, join HCA Team Meetings

Lessons Learned

- PFAC Advisors need time to learn about one another and to coalesce as a working group to realize their mission.
- Clinician and staff concerns about "airing our dirty laundry" and patient confidentiality need to be addressed
- Initial ambivalence about including patients in HCA meetings is giving way to willingness and desire for inclusion
- Buy-in from leadership is extremely helpful
- Time commitment from Advisors is higher than initially anticipated; attendance at daytime HCA meetings can be difficult for patients who work full-time.
- Patients are deeply invested in the outcome of their care and bring unique perspectives on needs and priorities. (Bronkert, [http://www.bmj.com/content/350/bmj.h148.full](http://www.bmj.com/content/350/bmj.h148.full))

Next Steps

- Collaborate with other PFACs throughout BIDMC
- Decide HCA PFAC’s Advisors’ tenure, keeping in mind the advantages of institutional memory as well as the benefits of fresh perspectives
- Define the range of ways Advisors can help HCA achieve its goal of patient engagement and compassionate care

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