

The Golden Hour

Having a visit from Ginger M is like having your sister visit you. That warm familiar smile, friendly pat on the shoulder, and the caring tone as she asks, “How are you and is there anything I can do to make your stay more comfortable?” Ginger’s visit makes the poking and prodding, the constant whirring of machines, and just being in a hospital a little more pleasant for patients at X Medical Center.

Every morning, Ginger M, Senior Director of Quality and Patient Engagement, along with 35 other leaders in the hospital—including the hospital president—consistently clear their schedules from 9am to 10am for the “Golden Hour,” the leadership rounding program. During this time, each leader visits with 10 to 12 patients, then gather to debrief afterward, with patients as the primary focus.

Patient matters run the gamut, from the room being too cold, to a faulty television, to someone who just wants Psalms read to her, to the celebration of a birthday; these could have been easily lost in a sea of requests and paperwork, but patient concerns and requests are brought up and addressed daily during “Debrief.” The debrief also provides an opportunity for immediate feedback; staff are notified of any positive comments received during the roundings.

“We’re handling patient concerns and complaints in real-time as a team,” said Don W, President of X Medical Center. “We’re holding each other accountable and supporting each other. Leaders write thank you cards to staff in appreciation for a job well done and I think I’ve written more than 200 of them.”

According to Ginger, the driving force behind the program, the leadership rounding program was created to emphasize X’s commitment to our patients. “We want our patients to truly feel like V.I.Ps, where they are important and valued,” she said.

And patients do feel the difference.

“It’s nothing like I’ve experienced,” said Ray H, patient at X Medical Center. “Management sets the tone. The care has been great and I’m impressed.”

“It’s [leadership rounding program] excellent. They went the extra mile for me,” said Gregory S, another patient. “They made me feel comfortable and safe. It shows they care, and I like that.”

With the leadership rounds impacting patients directly, Ginger and the other leaders of X are incorporating it as part of their long-term plan to impact HCAHPS scores.

“Initially, we saw a rise in our HCAHPS scores, but that has leveled off. We realize that this is multifactorial in nature, and ongoing work with rounds as well as staff and patient engagement is necessary for sustained increase on our HCAHPS scores,” said Ginger. “We are looking at rounds as a long-term strategy for improving patient satisfaction.”

Although feedback from patients have been positive, the program did face some initial skepticism from frontline staff. “There was fear that it was going to be a punitive thing, but that hasn’t happened at all,”

said Damen J, Physical Therapist. “Instead, the leaders were working with us. They were another set of eyes and ears to help us listen to patients’ needs.”

The program also brings the leaders rewards too. “I get to see people be healed and I don’t normally get to see that in the basement where I work, “ said Amber R, Director of Bio-engineering. “Patient care is impacted but networking has improved as well. It makes me feel part of the team.”

Over the years, X’s has had several rounding programs, but what makes the current one successful (rolled out in January 2015)?

“We had buy-in from the leaders, made time, cleared our calendars, opened our hearts, and went for it,” said Ginger.