

Working Together to Improve Patient Experience at Transform 2013

This post is by Margaret Alritz, Steelcase Health's Director of Healthcare Strategy.

A new activity this year at [Mayo Transform](#) was the "Forum" area, where participants visited a series of healthcare provocations. There were a series of 11 boards with a statement or question, along with a short discussion paragraph. Then, along with perhaps a diagram or series of photos, there was a spot for folks to offer their own sticky-note comments. The themes from the discussion boards included: "The point of care is not medical." "What if the key to compliance success was to design for failure?" "We should know patients on a deeper level than just their medical condition."

One of the most active boards was: "How can we improve our patients' experience in the hospital, not just our [HCAHPS scores](#)?" This is an area of discussion in which Steelcase Health has engaged, without necessarily assuming the two goals have to live in opposition or mutual exclusion. There is a cluster of stickies on this board that seem to be about patient participation - a concept that Steelcase Health has also considered in terms of patient empowerment. Just by putting these concepts of empowerment and patient satisfaction measurement together, it makes me think of **how we might start to measure patient engagement**, because measurement itself is not necessarily a bad thing and the overall intent of [HCAHPS](#) is to promote progress. But are we measuring the right things in order to encourage desired outcomes? For example, most of the HCAHPS survey today focuses on communication toward the patient. To oversimplify, you might say the questions are generally asking, "Did you understand what you were told?" And this seems like a step in the right direction to be sure, but what if we were to have higher ambitions for our patient experiences?

There is a general consensus in healthcare that patients desire respect, but perhaps more importantly, that they often do not receive the respect they desire in healthcare settings. Might we show respect by inviting and supporting and encouraging each other to engage with one another? What if we were a team as opposed to individuals trying to deliver information to each other? Would this slight re-framing make a difference? Interestingly, there is another small sticky cluster on this board where it looks as though clinicians are urging patients to "just ask me a question when you don't understand." **What if instead we collectively urged clinicians and patients to act as a team toward agreed upon goals? How might we then re-design this future team experience?** It has been great to visit each of these boards and read through the comments, which then help us re-think the original provocation. It's a great example of how simple paper-and-pen communication can further our thinking and our participation in addressing these complex issues.

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