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UPC: Another way for voices at the bedside to be heard

Via Christi's Unit Practice Councils, established to give nurses a greater voice in improving their professional practice environment, have done some excellent work over the past year. "But it's also been a resource that hasn't been tapped as effectively as it could be," says system Chief Nursing Officer Carla Yost.

That's why Yost and the UPC chairs recently came together to look at what's worked well and what needs improvement to ensure that the UPCs are serving as an effective forum for nurses serving at the bedside at Via Christi's Wichita hospitals. "Going forward, the group determined that we need to be more focused and ensure that the work of the UPCs is tied to Nursing's two strategic goals for 2017: Improving the patient experience and the hospitals' nurse retention rate," she said.

During the meeting, the group identified a need to better use data to bridge clinical care at the bedside to improving outcomes. One great example of an initiative now underway is the UPC at Via Christi Rehabilitation Center, which looked at their patient experience scores and identified that pain management was an opportunity for improvement. They did some research and found that better timing of dispensing pain medications prior to therapy resulted in better patient outcomes and satisfaction scores. They haven't fixed it, but they're working on it. Says Jeffrey Lavoie, RN, Rehab's UPC co-chair: "We've been working on this for the past month, and have seen improved timing that hopefully will lead to higher patient satisfaction scores."

Other needs included simplifying the process for bringing issues before the UPCs and establishing a method for prioritizing their activities; a template is under development for determining the priority focus, sources of needed help, identifying issues and opportunities, determining accountabilities and measuring and sharing progress. "This will allow us to ensure that the time spent on UPC activities is a great investment—both in the care we provide to our patients and the environment in which we provide that care," Yost said.

If you'd like to participate on the UPC or in a UPC-led activity, talk with your unit's UPC chair or nurse manager. A list of current and open UPC chair positions has been posted on viachristi.org/nursing.

Speaking of outstanding service...

A patient recently hospitalized at Via Christi Hospital St. Teresa for a total of 21 days wrote that while there she "realized it's not one or two people who make up the quality of the department. It's every person in that department who makes it a quality department. I would also like to point out that there was not one person who came into my room who did not ask me, 'Is there anything else that I can do for you?' before they left my room. EVERY TIME! THAT IS AMAZING! It takes a team of good people working together toward the same cause to make such an amazing hospital such as St. Teresa. It is clear to see that everyone at St. Teresa is passionate about their commitment to giving good quality care to their patients. I know, because I was a recipient of that quality care."

In her note, she noted the calm and reassuring presence of the entire team, specifically noting the nurses "who were all so caring and kind, always making sure that they had every bit of information they needed to give the best care they could" as well as the doctors and respiratory, lab and housekeeping staff who were all exceptionally kind and courteous "each and every time they entered my room." Way to go, team!