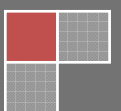


2009

Bellwether: A Bias For Action.

Turn hospital survey data into fast and sustainable improvements in the patient experience.

As Value-Based Purchasing encroaches on the 'patient experience' domain, HCAHPS excellence is simply no longer an option – it's a necessity. To affect fast and sustainable change, a performance improvement tool that combines real-time patient, family, and rounding perspectives of patient care with a robust accountability protocol is best practice.



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The VBP and HCAHPS Imperatives

As Value-Based Purchasing encroaches on the ‘patient experience’ domain, HCAHPS excellence is simply no longer an option – it’s a necessity.

As part of any quality improvement process, a daily rigor around data collection, analysis, and improvement activities must be taking place throughout the organization to achieve meaningful improvements.

While survey vendors provide bullet-proof statistics on a monthly or quarterly basis, their results are often just samples, and, even when accessible between reporting cycles, provide little actionable data for management.

Shaping your HCAHPS outcomes requires a simple process akin to biometrics. It requires daily *real-time* feedback from patients, families, and hourly and administrator rounding to actively identify and resolve patient issues.

Management by Bellwether

‘Bellwether stocks’ or ‘barometer stocks’ are leading indicators of changes in the stock market. Analysts tend to keep a close eye on them, since they are often indicators of things to come. The early identification of unit-level HCAHPS bellwethers is the most powerful and aggressive way to manage HCAHPS performance improvement.

If your HCAHPS management regime had a performance improvement tool that allowed your team to find out about a problem today, and fix it today, this discipline would be reflected in the survey results reported to CMS.



Introducing Bellwether: The HCAHPS Performance Improvement Tool

To understand Bellwether, you first have to understand what it is not: a survey tool.

Bellwether is a management tool, that augments your statistically-validated survey tool by providing a robust action-improvement methodology and support framework.

It provides management with real-time information to action patient/family/employee concerns - so that action can be taken to correct those concerns to the hospital's advantage as soon as possible (within hours, not days or weeks or months).

Bellwether's power lies in its flexibility.

By deploying Bellwether in the 'hot spots' that have been identified by the hospital's survey vendor, management can assure hourly and daily progress is being made against the important patient and employee dissatisfiers that have the potential to affect HCAHPS outcomes and market share.

So, What Exactly *IS* Bellwether?

Bellwether is a real-time patient experience report card that provides management with powerful information to make decisions about the efficiency of unit level performance improvement activities.

Through bedside inputs via a web-accessed mini computer, and through Blackberry-enabled interfaces, patient, family, nurse, and leader interpretations about patient experience are collected. At-a-glance reporting allows management to:

- determine if problems persist
- adjust corrective action
- celebrate successes
- drill-down to find root-causes
- implement service recovery processes to salvage relationships

How and Where to Deploy Bellwether

In-Patient Satisfaction via Patient and Family Input

To receive candid feedback about a patient's in-hospital experience, often the best inputs are from friends and family. We recommend making Bellwether available to visitors, who can enter their perceptions of 'their patient's' experience directly into the computer.

Patient-access to the input device can be offered as well, to solicit specific reports on priority items.

We advise either offering the computer to them, or facilitating the discussion through a trusted person such as a Patient Advocate, responsible Volunteer, Nurse, or Manager.

In-Patient Satisfaction via Rounding Input

We recommend installing both a leader rounding and a nurse hourly rounding process – both have been shown to improve patient satisfaction.

By integrating Bellwether as the data-capture service of all of this rounding, Administrators will be able to zero-in on persistent HCAHPS challenges by unit and by shift. The problem/system resolution process can be accelerated, with the data provided by Bellwether.

The Blackberry interface may be particularly useful here, to record rounding input directly into Bellwether.

Clearly, by entering data from multiple points about the in-patient experience, the improvement process is accelerated, while the damage caused by negative HCAHPS scores to the hospital's VBP reimbursement is mitigated.

Out-Patient Satisfaction

Hospitals can 'get out in front' of patient satisfaction in this vital market-growth segment, by demonstrating genuine in-hospital care, while following up the discharged patient with an email link to the Bellwether Patient Experience Report Card.

The results of the in-home completion of this 'report card' will trigger the same tracking and improvement services as provided with In-Patient. Perhaps most-important is the hospital's ability to intervene with the patient, based on the results of their report card. For example, the Bellwether system can be set to produce alerts should important experience thresholds not be achieved: eg: if a patient reports that she does not know how to take a certain medication, an immediate telephone call notice can be triggered to an on-duty nurse.

Real-time feedback. Immediate action/service recovery.

ED Patient Satisfaction

Because ED is the de facto 'marketing department' of most hospitals, satisfaction is critical in this area. Bellwether provides administrators with the flexibility to question patient satisfaction about their ED experience todate, upon leaving the hospital, or upon admission as an inpatient, or any other variant.

The opportunity to integrate patient satisfaction into a continuity of care strategy can be accelerated with Bellwether.

By understanding an ED patient's level of satisfaction against hospital-defined drivers, the hospital can determine the likelihood for the need to execute a service recovery strategy with the patient, as she becomes an in-patient.

Employee Satisfaction

Bellwether provides the opportunity to question and analyze not just 'patient experience' but also 'employment experience'.

This is powerful information, that can be collected by focus group, at staff meetings, via kiosk in high-traffic areas, or others that may be appropriate.



The question set can mirror particularly troublesome questions from your last (scientific) employee opinion survey, or can be a simpler version that is meant to quickly detect likely opportunities to improve management/leadership skill, through coaching, or through additional training.

How to Select Questions

The question set can be configured to meet the requirements of the hospital, from the simple-to-use Administrator's Panel. To facilitate continuous improvement, we recommend selecting questions that closely mirror the HCAHPS questions that have been lagging, and are most likely to have a negative impact on the hospital's VBP reimbursement.

FAQ's

- Can I add my own questions? Yes!
- Is it bi-lingual? Yes – English/Spanish
- Technical specs? Sql Server, hosted in an underground, double-redundant facility in Florida.
- HIPAA Issues? Patients are not identifiable, only via room number and date.
- Security Issues? Keyword alert on pre-set threatening words in both English and Spanish
- Analytics? Graphs by question, run charts, composite benchmark with other installations, detailed on-screen explanations.
- Support? On-call support 18x365