



Smilow Achieves
High Scores for

Patient Satisfaction

Physicians, nurses, and staff members at Smilow Cancer Hospital at Yale-New Haven go out of their way to ensure that patients have the best possible experience during their hospital stay. Their efforts are recognized and appreciated by patients, according to a recent survey on patient satisfaction of hospital care.

Smilow scored exceptionally well on nursing care provided on the women's oncology and surgical oncology units in the 2013 Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey, the first national standardized survey to measure patients' perspectives of their hospital experience. Nurses scored highly in such areas as treating patients with courtesy and

respect, listening carefully, and explaining in ways that patients can understand. "The HCAHPS survey affirms what we want to do every day; take wonderful care of our patients and their families," Catherine Lyons, RN, MS, NEA-BC, Executive Director, Smilow Patient Care Services, said. "When you come into our hospital we want you to leave thinking that you received the best care, the most attention, and the best support."

Achieving a high level of patient satisfaction requires continuous management and maintenance. Ms. Lyons and other leaders read the hundreds of patient comments sent to them weekly by Press Ganey (the company that administers the surveys), the majority of which are positive. "When you come to a place repeatedly for treatment, it sets a higher bar," said Ms. Lyons, who enjoys reading the comments because it gives her a flavor of the patient experience.

Since Smilow opened in 2009, there has been a steady increase in the degree of patient satisfaction, thanks to concerted efforts to improve patient care. "The key to the

staff on both units is that they have phenomenal teamwork and their main priority and focus is always the patient and the patient experience," Tracy Carafeno, RN, MS, Patient Service Manager for both units, explained. "They go above and beyond every day."

Initiatives to improve patient satisfaction have included taking steps to ensure that the hospital environment promotes healing and rest by such practices as dimming the lights and closing the doors at night and coordinating care to avoid constantly interrupting those who are trying to sleep. Ms. Lyons and her colleagues also work with nurses and physicians on communication strategies such as encouraging physicians to sit down when talking to patients during rounds. There is an effort to put nurses back at the bedside through such practices as placing computers in patient rooms and bedside change of shift report, in which nurses changing shifts communicate with one another about their patients' status at the bedside, in front of the patient. There is also a shared sense of responsibility. "All the nurses take care of all the patients,

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not just the ones they're assigned to, and that makes a big difference in the patient experience," Maggie Zampano, RN, OCN, who works on the women's oncology unit, said.

"The leadership team is incredibly proud of the staff at Smilow Cancer Hospital and the HCAHPS results affirm that we are succeeding in providing outstanding patient-centered care," said Thomas J. Lynch, Jr., MD, Physician-in-Chief of Smilow Cancer Hospital at Yale-New Haven.

The survey results will be tied to Medicare reimbursement in 2014, but to Smilow physicians and nurses, they represent something far more important. "People who choose to work in oncology – doctors, nurses, environmental service workers, social workers, pharmacists – get up every day and commit themselves to one of the hardest specialties there is," Ms. Lyons said. "The most important thing to them is knowing they made a difference and that they contributed to their patients having a good experience."