

Know your scores: Measure quality from laundry to OR

Quality and excellence. We all want them, but what you can't measure, you can't improve.

When I joined The Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha eight years ago, I found performance measures. As a result, I have made the aggressive pursuit of quality and safety part of the culture at Nebraska Medical Center. Operating with quality at the forefront of all of our organizational endeavors is not only the right thing to do; the external environment

for inspection takes many man-hours, and that's time away from a facility's central mission—providing care and services that promote the well-being of patients.

On the other hand, our ongoing commitment to quality and safety is what has ensured the success of Nebraska Medical Center in the current economic environment. The many accreditations and awards we have secured stand as testimony to that success and are an investment in our future.

In 2002, the medical center expanded its existing quality and performance improvement systems to include Six Sigma processes.

Adoption of programs like Six Sigma, Balanced Scorecard, Crew Resource Management, the internal supply-chain initiative, and participation in programs such as the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's 100,000 Lives Campaign, demonstrates the hospital's commitment to seek out and apply best-practice models.



doctor or nurse quickly notices if he or she can't secure proper-fitting scrubs. Laundry service is a good barometer of how committed a healthcare facility is to overall quality.

After all, if a facility compromises on laundry quality, will it also compromise on surgical procedures?

Seeking accreditations and awards sends a strong message to employees, suppliers and the community that hospital management demands the highest level of commitment, safety and accountability for its patients. Accreditations and awards are independent reviews by experts from within the industry designed to set benchmarks based on best practices.

We believe this practice forces everyone to stretch their creativity and meet and exceed the highest industry standards in all aspects of operations. That's good for team morale and patients. And that's good for business.

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(Editor's note: This letter was originally published in Modern Healthcare, a sister Crain Communications publication.)

“LAUNDRY SERVICE IS A GOOD BAROMETER OF HOW COMMITTED A HEALTHCARE FACILITY IS TO OVERALL QUALITY. AFTER ALL, IF A FACILITY COMPROMISES ON LAUNDRY QUALITY, WILL IT ALSO COMPROMISE ON SURGICAL PROCEDURES?”

now demands this. As we all know, assessment of quality by both patients and payers is on the rise.

To achieve the highest quality and safety standards in the industry, we began by organizing teams around key operation and service areas. We then sought accreditations and awards as a way to benchmark our progress and performance.

There are many reasons not to seek accreditations and awards that quantify the standard of care and services your facility provides. During these tough economic times, some would say it's just too inconvenient and expensive. Indeed, applying for accreditation from an independent third-party organization and preparing

Nebraska Medical Center is accredited by the Joint Commission and is the only hospital in Nebraska to achieve awards and recognition from J.D. Power & Associates for patient satisfaction and cardiovascular service excellence. We also have magnet status for nursing excellence, a distinction earned by fewer than 5% of all hospitals nationally. Our cancer center earned National Cancer Institute designation.

Other awards include: recognition from the American Heart Association and the National Association of Epilepsy Centers, the Edgerton Awards for quality, and the consumers' choice award from the National Research Corp.

We seek verification of quality and safety at all levels of our operations. For example, we recently received notice that Ameritex Services, our healthcare laundry services provider, had achieved accreditation from the Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council. We were thrilled Ameritex Services took the initiative to secure this accreditation. It aligns with our beliefs and raises the quality bar even higher for our facility.

You may ask, “Why should a CEO bother with the details of laundry?” Well, providing quality healthcare textiles at our hospital is an incredibly important service. A patient immediately notices the quality of gowns, sheets and blankets. And a