

# IMPROVEMENT & ASSESSMENT IS A TEAM EFFORT

We can all agree that the best method to develop and sustain improvement is through effective teamwork. This is no different in a grievance setting. Once a problem/issue is identified it is in everyone's best interest to look at it from several different perspectives and choose a solution that best meets the needs of everyone.

## From a Patient Perspective

As a patient in a setting where a grievance has been filed, it can be very difficult to consider sitting down with the staff and looking at possible solutions. There may be some perceived "hard feelings" on either or both sides. But as adults in a professional setting, it is important to put aside any residual negative feelings and be part of the solution.

## From the Staff Perspective

Teams are a common occurrence in most units. As in all Quality Improvement Initiatives, a strong team is a critical component of success. Individual team members provide a unique perspective on the issues under consideration and teams can play on the strengths of each individual team member.

## Characteristics of a Strong Team

When you are selecting your team you should avoid the trap of looking for "like minded" people. It is often felt that having people with the same perspectives will result in a cohesive team. This, however, will deprive you of the advantages of working with diverse visions and ideas and will result in a solution that only appeals to a small population.

**Some of the individual characteristics you can look for in selecting your team are:**

- ✓ **The organizer**
- ✓ **The creative thinker**
- ✓ **The empathic listener**
- ✓ **The historian**
- ✓ **The innovator**

If you are able to staff your team with members falling within these categories AND give them equal input and respect on the problem being investigated, you will have a winning combination of insights and talents.

Another advantage to the team approach for improvement and assessment is the cross coverage provided by a fully informed team. Team members are people, and, as such, are subject to all of life's interferences. If one member is unable to participate or complete their assignments, other informed team members can help fill in the gaps until a new team member can be found. This cross coverage can be vital to keeping timelines in place as circumstances change.

### The Patient's Place in the Team

Patients are a vital part of any improvement and/or assessment team because of their unique perspective. The decisions and protocols developed by the team will impact patients on the ground floor. They are in a position that allows for repetitive observation of most initiatives and can report back on what they are seeing or not seeing. This reporting can be a critical step.

Perhaps most importantly, if a patient is involved in the grievance process, inclusion in the team can dramatically open up their perspective and demonstrate the unit's commitment to solving the problem. Seeing the situation from the eyes of all team members can help to bring everything into perspective.

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