Reducing Team Member Injuries through Culture Change

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Significance of the Problem
Advocate Sherman Hospital implemented the Safe Patient Handling (SPH) committee in late 2019. A thorough patient handling and mobility assessment was completed providing a mobility profile for each inpatient unit, identifying risks, equipment needs, processes and training solutions (Churrucu et al., 2021). While the organization was initially challenged by sudden onset of the pandemic, our leadership’s focus on bringing about positive change in patient care remained our primary objective. Support was provided for the creation of a program to address the growing number of patient handling injuries (PHIs) that ranged from upper 20’s to mid 30’s annually between 2013 and 2019. Implementation of the program proved to be successful in its early stages, but one question remained: What can be done to change the culture and to sustain these results? (Zebrak et al., 2022).

Objective
- Our goal was set on developing a program that aligns with hospital’s mission of helping people live well, including patients and team members.
- Our objective was to create an environment of belonging for team members of various roles by providing a safe seat at the table and empowering them to subscribe and contribute.
- We envisioned best-practice to push our status quo to empower team members to always consider their safety and well-being during all patient handling interactions (Wahlin et al., 2021). A culture where team members choose safety over convenience or speed. A culture where team members role model safe patient handling behaviors, and mentor others to do the same (Zebrak et al., 2022).

Approach: To change the culture
Interventions performed to address the plague of team member injuries were not only focused on addressing the immediate problem but also empowering cultural change and movement away from unsafe mobility and handing practices (Wahlin et al., 2021).
- SPH Kick-off in April 2021 to re-energize team members and remind them of our purpose of keeping them safe.
- Scheduled SPH Committee meetings
- Team Member Injury Investigation process inclusive of team member follow up and action planning with the leader.
- Commitment Letter & policy review
- Organizing Transfer Mobility Coaches (TMCs) & cadence of their meetings
- Defining Roles & Responsibilities for TMCs
- Development of New Hire Onboarding class and monthly SPH Make-up classes.
- Involving TMCs in teaching SPH classes
- Development of TMC Rounding Tool
- Defining the process for Room Readiness
- Partnering with ED to initiate patient handling devices in ED
- Creating tags for supply rooms to help TM select correct supply items
- Collaboration with the Falls Team and participation in the Falls
- TMC driven Rolling Cart featuring equipment of focus and based on assessment needs.
- Featuring Team Member Safety Week bring awareness to teammate safety.
- Equipment of the Month focus driven by TMCs
- Ongoing use of peer-coaching and praise to support the sustainment of the culture change.

Results

Discussion: Our Success Story
- Sherman’s success is credited to the grand vision of our chief nurse, leaders’ support, engagement of the stakeholders and autonomy of transfer mobility coaches (Zebrak et al., 2022).
- Inspired by the Advocate’s mission to live well, our team members evolved from participating in a committee to owning the agenda and the action plan for this organization.
- Figure 1 shows trends in PHIs over time demonstrating significant decrease in number of teammate injuries between 2021 and 2023 to date.
- Figures 2 - 4 indicate PHIs within consecutive years starting in 2021.
- Figure 5 highlights correlation of all PHIs and ones specific to boosting/repositioning. Decrease in this type of injuries is evident.

Implications for Practice
There is a definite correlation between culture change and safety outcomes for the frontline (Churrucu et al., 2021). Team members are more likely to participate in the program and adopt to change when they align with the mission of the organization (Wahlin et al., 2021). Identifying champions and routinely revisiting their focus on the mission allows for the merge of commitment and passion that inspires others. Leaders’ support for champions’ autonomy sparks creativity as teammates’ owned action plan is designed and revised (Zebrak et al., 2022). Impacting results through culture change is possible by moving away from participation to empowering teammates to own the program and drive the agenda.

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