



How to successfully engage patients and families in building quality-improvement initiatives

10 INSIGHTS FROM HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND LEADERS

The Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement (CFHI) works shoulder-to-shoulder with organizations to build their capacity to partner with patients and families to improve quality across the continuum of care. We support patient-centred healthcare improvements that engage patients and families in their design, delivery and evaluation. Co-designing these solutions with patients and families can provide project teams with more diverse perspectives, greater insights, and better results than those experienced if they were working on their own. Through the work of CFHI collaboratives, healthcare providers and leaders have provided insights on what worked for them to partner effectively with patients and families in their quality improvement initiatives.

Image above: Healthcare provider and patient from Whitehorse General Hospital (credit: GBP creative)

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HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY ENGAGE PATIENTS AND FAMILIES IN BUILDING QUALITY-IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

INSIGHTS FROM HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND LEADERS

1. Recognize the value of patient engagement.

Successfully implementing patient-centred practices requires a cultural shift to focus on what matters most to patients, families and caregivers. Support your team throughout the engagement process by helping them understand why patient engagement is important and how to best identify methods to effectively engage patients and families.

2. Consider patients as members of the improvement team.

Improvement teams who purposefully integrate Patient and Family Advisors onto their team see more fulsome and sustained participation. Fully integrate advisors into your team by inviting them to regular team meetings, including them in all communications and encouraging their input in the decision-making process.

3. Work together to co-design improvements.

Providers emphasized that co-design with Patient and Family Advisors led to better ideas for change. A collaborative approach encourages everyone to share their experiences, ask questions and challenge the status quo.

4. Engage patients early and involve them throughout the project.

Engage advisors as early and as often as possible and discuss how they envision their role and contributions. Early patient involvement allows their input and perspectives to shape the initiative from the outset and throughout the project, and not as an afterthought.

5. Support and role model engagement.

Strong and inspired leadership is necessary to overcome any barriers to engagement and to demonstrate what it looks like in practice. Not only does the support of leadership facilitate engagement, it is essential to create the culture shift needed for engagement.

6. Understand the experience of care through the eyes of patients.

Patients have 'expertise by experience' so it's important to consider their unique point of view. Patient stories provide a window into their experiences and can motivate and

inspire providers to consider how experiences shared by patients may be improved. Storytelling is a powerful tool for change, especially when patient stories are heard with the intention of acting on lessons learned.

7. Provide patients with on-going support.

Support for advisors can happen in many ways including: by pairing new advisors with more experienced advisors to facilitate learning and integration; by providing time to brief and debrief patients before and after meetings; and by offering opportunities for feedback on an engagement activity. Support may also mean providing flexible ways for patients to be involved.

8. Provide staff and physicians with on-going support.

For many clinicians, having patients as members of planning and implementation teams is new and can be uncomfortable. Provide clear role descriptions for all team members, including patient advisors, as well as guiding principles for partnerships and the evidence that supports patient and family-centred care practices. Designate someone to facilitate shared decision-making and collaboration.

9. Ensure your team has the proper resources to engage patients.

Depending on your initiative's administrative demands, human and financial resources may be required to coordinate and sustain Patient and Family Advisor engagement.

10. Evaluate your engagement efforts.

Success requires the ongoing evaluation of the process and outcomes of the engagement. Dedicating resources for evaluation and improvement helps provide consistent feedback on how the engagement is happening, what can change to enhance and sustain partnerships with patients, and to demonstrate value. Outcome evaluation should reflect what matters most to patients and include patient experience of care.