The connection between employee engagement & patient engagement

Does engagement affect the quality of healthcare by delivering patient centered care?
What is patient-centered care?

‘Providing care that is respectful of and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs, and values, and ensuring that patient values guide all clinical decisions.’

- Institute of Medicine

Patient-centered care is based on 4 attributes

- Whole-person care.
- Coordination and communication
- Patient support and empowerment
- Ready access

- Bechtel (2011)

The Picker Institute has delineated these attributes in 8 dimensions:
Employee engagement is when the organisation values the employee & the employee values the organisation

Clark & MacLeod 2009

According to P.S. Gill there seems to be a analogy between employee engagement and patient engagement:

‘The most commonly used dimensions of employee engagement include: communication, management effectiveness, alignment with organization, opportunity for development and recognition, and salary and compensation.

There seems to be an analogy between office/work settings and health care settings, especially with regards to manager–subordinate and health care provider–patient relationships. Other similarities include the existence of rules and procedures and specific objectives.

It is argued that better health outcomes can be achieved by adequately addressing patient engagement. (1)

‘We found that every in our case when our engagement levels goes up 1% our operating margin goes up 0,5%’

– Ed Oxford Senior Vice President Banner Health

The link between employee engagement & quality

‘There is a clear interrelationship between employee satisfaction, the quality of care, and patient satisfaction’

- Newman et al.’s (2001)

This is also what Graham Lowe found in his research for the article ‘How Employee Engagement Matters for Hospital Performance’ as placed in Healthcare Quarterly Vol.15 No.2 2012. Diagram 1 and 2 are from his article. Diagram one depicts correlation between patient care and engagement, diagram 2 shows the relation between quality (safety, procedures, failure, etc.) and engagement.

‘Nurses who are satisfied with their jobs exhibit higher levels of patient safety and less medication errors which help increase patient satisfaction.’

- Rathert and May, 2007
‘Quality improvement initiatives have a positive correlation with employee satisfaction as well as client satisfaction’

Kammerlind, et al, 2004

Atkins et al., (1996) showed that employee dissatisfaction negatively impacts the quality of care and ultimately has an adverse effect on patient loyalty and in turn hospital profitability.

In order to sustain or improve quality you need to have an engaged workforce. National Research Corporation Picker Institute places employee engagement at the base of their path to patient-centered care (right after partnering with leadership). The NRC says it’s the logical progression to improve quality and organizational goals.

‘When employees are more satisfied it helps reduce stress, turnover, leaves of absence, and lower work-related disability and violence claims’

Harmon, et al, 2003; Joiner and Bartram, 2004

Engagement-first attitude

Especially in North-American Healthcare organizations employee engagement is seen as a crucial parameter for obtaining high quality care, patient-satisfaction and patient-engagement.

The Quality Healthcare Workplace Model from the Ontario Hospital Association (as pictured on the right) is a fine example of this engagement-first attitude.
Satisfied employees were found to lead to shortened lengths of stay for patients and lower variable costs
- Harmon, et al., 2003; Karasek 1990

FORUM compiled all the research they found connecting employee engagement to quality of care and outcomes in Healthcare organizations. Their findings can be found in these tables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Reported Relationships &amp; Outcomes from Literature Review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effects of Higher Employee Engagement Levels on Employees</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improves employee productivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Improves relationships with management</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reduces job stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increases employee satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increases retention &amp; turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effects of Higher Employee Engagement &amp; Satisfaction on Patients</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improved care quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased patient satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increased patient loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effects of Higher Employee Engagement/Satisfaction on Financial Performance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lower employee recruitment/retention and training costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Higher patient loyalty to organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Possibly lower costs related to the delivery of patient care (because of shorter patient stays)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 2: Reported Methods to Impact Engagement from Literature Review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Empowerment in decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Management accessibility &amp; leadership styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recognition programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Workplace culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organizational communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trust &amp; respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Company reputation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Access to resources, training, information, &amp; opportunity</td>
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‘Health care employee morale also demonstrates a strong correlation with patient satisfaction scores, showing that the lack of commitment and engagement have far-reaching impacts on more than just employee turnover’
- JCAHO 2005
Engagement, leadership & culture versus quality

‘Quality leadership in health care organizations helps foster an environment that provides quality care which is linked with patient satisfaction’

- Fahad Al-Mailam (2005)

As many studies suggest, quality leadership that provides empowering work environments are more likely to result in engaged employees and tend to be the most successful at increasing the quality of care provided. And as Graham Lowe states: ‘The more-engaged employees are better able than their less-engaged colleagues to achieve organizational goals.’ There is empirical confirmation that this indeed is the case, focusing on four outcomes: retention, quality of patient care or services provided by the respondent’s team/unit, patient safety culture and patient-centred care.

There is a strong link between leadership - employee engagement - organizational culture and patient satisfaction & engagement.

‘If health care organizations want to become patient-centered, they must create and nurture an environment in which their most important asset—their workforce—is valued and treated with the same level of dignity and respect that the organization expects its employees to provide to patients and families.’

- Commonwealth Fund  ‘Patient-centred Care What Does It Take’

* Diagram taken from ‘How Employee Engagement Matters for Hospital Performance’
Graham Lowe in Healthcare Quarterly volume 15 nr. 2 2012
Sources and literature used and recommended

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- Website Picker Institute National Research Corporation
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More information: www.91engagement.nl

Email: info@91engagement.nl

Blog (English): http://91engagement.wordpress.com/category/english
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