Suppliers work with providers to deliver superior patient care

There’s a growing push among supply chain partners to support and improve a patient’s overall healthcare experience. Hospital reimbursements are more dependent than ever on care quality, and suppliers are embracing the patient experience movement to deliver high-value products and services more effectively.
ACA provides the blueprint

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) and its related programs are the catalyst behind the patient experience movement. “The ACA’s Hospital Value-Based Purchasing (HVBP) Program is designed to promote better clinical outcomes as well as improve a patient’s experience of care during hospital stays,” says Florence Doyle, Vice President, Strategic Sourcing, CHE Trinity Health.

The HVBP program uses healthcare performance metrics to determine hospital Medicare reimbursement rates. One metric, the Patient Experience of Care score, relies on patient surveys to measure overall perceptions of hospital experiences. Results are determined by factors such as hospital food preparation, environmental services, and even staff with whom patients interact. Manufacturers and distributors are taking note of these metrics, reorienting their service offerings to address quality improvement.

“It is the responsibility of supply chain professionals to ensure they understand the new patient experience landscape and that provider expectations are clearly articulated in vendor contracts,” says Doyle.

Suppliers look to respond

Suppliers are seizing opportunities to embrace patient experience. Welch Allyn is one such champion of the movement, focusing on the ways its products and services are a part of that experience.

“We follow the formula that value is a function of both quality and cost. Each carries a number of important aspects for one to gain a full understanding of what generates real improvement in healthcare settings,” explains Steve Meyer, President and CEO, Welch Allyn. “Given the pressures facing healthcare today, providers are increasingly making trade-offs around the ‘value propositions’ we offer; our sensitivity to it has increased dramatically over the past few years.”

Meyer offers three important areas suppliers should consider while shaping their patient experience strategy:

1. **Products and services.** Think about what you are currently offering. Understand the features providers really value for the given cost and how this maps to their P&L. Ask whether these products can improve care and outcomes—and if there’s proof to back it up—and ask if patients will be and feel better as a result of their interactions with your products and services.

2. **Sales reps.** Sales reps can be valuable problem solvers for providers. In a crazy, mixed-up healthcare environment, many are looking for real solutions to help navigate changes. Suppliers may not always have the perfect solution, but they can still be a resource. When helping, it’s important to remember who the real customer is: the patient. If more effective, lower-cost care can be delivered, everyone wins.

3. **Distribution networks.** Meyer suggests using lean processes to streamline distribution networks and promote value. Hospitals and physician offices have crucial needs for supplies to be delivered in low-cost, timely, and efficient manners. This affects patients, who have greater say since they are being asked about healthcare environment experiences. Every supplier can make an impact, since the ability to reduce the burden of work frees more time to focus on patients. This positions healthcare systems to deliver higher value, which is good for everyone.

“We need to challenge each other to focus on how we can deliver services more effectively, allowing patients to get healthier and stay healthier.” —Steve Meyer, President and CEO, Welch Allyn

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