

NCR Quality Symposium engages patients and care teams



Tiffany Christensen, Vice President of Experience Innovation at The Beryl Institute, discusses her experiences with cystic fibrosis and the overall patient perspective in the health care experience. (Courtesy photo)

11/22/2017 By: Military Health System Communications Office

Recommended Content:

[Quality and Safety of Health Care \(for Healthcare Professionals\)](#) | [Clinical Quality Management](#)

Diagnosed with cystic fibrosis halfway to her first birthday, Tiffany Christensen says that struggles with her health, and with the health care system, lent purpose to her life at a young age. Decades of illness, hospitalizations, and two double lung transplants later, she has taken her history – her “Ph.D. in being a patient” – and applied it to improving the care experience of others. Today she is a patient advocate, author, and speaker, and the vice president of experience innovation at the Beryl Institute, a global community of practice dedicated to improving the patient experience.

When Christensen shared her story with the health care providers, staff, patients, and family members at the National Capital Region Quality Symposium at Joint Base Andrews Nov. 9, she acknowledged the challenges facing everyone in the room. “I was in health care for just two minutes and I got burned out,” Christensen said of her initial experience as a patient advocate

for Duke Health System. “I had such high expectations of the impact I was going to make on people’s lives, and I don’t feel like I was able to carry through on that impact.”

To achieve impact, Christensen urged providers to enlist help. “When I see organizations talking about high reliability, I think there is one resource not being utilized – patients and family members,” she said.



Quality symposium host Army Lt. Col. Downing Lu, Chief Quality Officer, National Capital Region Medical Directorate, joins panelists for “The Patient and Staff Experience in the NCR.” Panelists (left to right) include Navy Capt. Mark Kobejla, Director, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center; Jennifer Blake, MD, Deputy Chief of Clinical Services, Andrew Rader U.S. Army Health Clinic; Army Lt. Col. Kathy Spangler, Commander, Andrew Rader U.S. Army Health Clinic; and Air Force Lt. Col. Walter Singh, Chief Nurse, 11th Medical Squadron Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling. Joined at right by Rear Adm. David Lane, Director, National Capital Region Medical Directorate. (Courtesy photo)

Presenters throughout the day touched on the theme of patient and care team engagement in improving the high-reliability experience. They offered tactics for achieving this transparency, including:

- **Implementing Leadership Staff Rounds.** Navy Capt. Mark Kobejla emphasized that his participation in leadership staff rounds enabled him to tap the collective experience of 7,000 lifetimes of work — from the 7,000 staff at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where Kobejla is the director of the medical center. Practicing leadership staff rounds gives leaders “presence, discovery, the ability to reinforce priorities, and (the chance to model) the behaviors you expect of leaders in the organization,” he said.

- **Hiring Chief Experience Officers.** Army Lt. Col. Kathy Spangler, commander of the Andrew Rader U.S. Army Health Clinic at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, and Dr. Jennifer Blake, deputy chief of clinical services there, discussed the benefits of engaging a chief experience officer at Rader, the first facility in the NCR to implement this role. “When bridging the gap between experience and expectations, you need to understand what those expectations were — what’s important to our team members, what’s important to our patients?” Blake said. Since adding a chief experience officer, Rader has seen improved satisfaction among patients and care team members alike. For example, in July 2017, the facility scored 100 percent for the first time on the Joint Outpatient Experience Survey question 23: Satisfied with Healthcare. They achieved a score of 99.5 percent Satisfied with Healthcare for the month of September. Additionally, the team has gained a new mechanism for gathering team member comments and utilizing that input to improve experience (e.g., making changes to the break room, offering healthier snack options).
- **Using a One-Question Survey.** Air Force Lt. Col. Walter Singh, chief nurse, 11th Medical Squadron Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, described how his team distributed a one-question survey to all adult patients at check-in to learn what one thing each patient would like to change about their care experience. He reported that most respondents, at 22 percent, were looking for improvements in the area of access.

By bringing the broader NCR team together, alongside world-renowned experts inside and outside the Military Health System, the symposium offered an avenue for sharing information and best practices, whether through posters or collaborative discussion. Army Lt. Col. Downing Lu, chief quality officer for the NCR and host of the symposium, noted, “Reliability in our system is a team sport – it requires participation among all team members.”

Article Link: <https://health.mil/News/Articles/2017/11/22/NCR-Quality-Symposium-engages-patients-and-care-teams>