



MAKING A DIFFERENCE— NURSING LEADERSHIP

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Ambulatory surgery center (ASC) nurse leaders are faced with juggling multifaceted patient care, regulatory standards, and countless other responsibilities in a competent, efficient fashion. While these tasks are the foundation of daily duties, the ability to manage them is often misconstrued as the ability to lead. However, leadership—a vitally important component of the bustling ASC environment—is much more nuanced and complex.

CASE STUDY

Early in the morning, the nurse administrator of a humming ASC, Bea, had an employee call out sick. Despite the anticipated long day ahead, she greeted staff and debriefed them on the situation. While Bea focused on helping to cover the staff

shortage, her charge nurses worked to assemble patient charts. Bea asked staff to relay the situation to the surgeons as they filed in, so they also knew what to expect. Additionally, patients were informed that while there might be a longer wait time than usual, staff were working diligently to get them seen in a timely fashion. Ultimately, Bea's leadership helped employees better handle an otherwise unsavory situation gracefully. Staff were thankful for her leadership, willingness to help, and informative approach, all of which contributed to maintaining quality patient care.

THE BENEFITS OF NURSE LEADERS

When an ophthalmic surgery center experiences a challenge (e.g., being short-staffed, angry surgeons, upset patients), strong leadership

can make or break the situation. An approachable leader encourages staff to feel comfortable and confident to discuss and bring solutions to the table. Team input creates an opportunity to bond with colleagues. Managers who learn to lead with purpose, emotional intelligence, and communication—the core pillars of leadership—do more than manage the operation. They make a difference in the daily operation for staff and patients. Listed below are a few of the many ways a strong nurse leader can positively impact an ASC.

Manage and motivate staff.

Strong leaders understand that fostering collaboration and inspiring teamwork build a cohesive team that will tackle common ASC issues with confidence. Inspiring staff to perform, think strategically, and collaborate with peers to find

solutions raises morale and fosters teamwork. Strong nurse leaders lead by example, project enthusiasm, and a “can-do” attitude. They are the staff’s cheerleader while understanding staff skill levels, recognizing and utilizing staff strengths, and emphasizing that as a team they are stronger than as individuals. When staff feel empowered and supported, teams are often stronger and turnover rate decreases.

Cultivate a culture of safety.

A culture of safety results from the effective interplay of environmental structures and processes, the attitudes and perceptions of workers, and the safety-related behaviors of individuals. To develop such a culture, leadership engagement is critical. Employees need to see that leadership is committed to patient well-being and need to feel supported and confident in ensuring that safe, quality care is being provided by all. A strong leader who cares about creating this kind of supportive environment will walk the floor, noticing what is working well and asking what else could be done to enhance safe, quality care—and then share these comments with staff members during a huddle or while making rounds when staff are actively providing care. Ultimately, such leadership will encourage staff not only to work toward change, but to act when needed.

Maintain quality care. An administrator’s commitment to quality care will extend throughout the entire organization, uniting staff toward the shared goal of consistent patient satisfaction. Administrators must actively maintain operational and regulatory understanding as well as

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supply chain optimization—while overseeing and guiding staff to do the same. Be clear with instructions and if questions arise, explain, either in the moment or at an appropriate time (sooner rather than later). Maintaining quality care standards and being accountable and considerate even when having difficult conversations also contributes to improving each patient’s experience.

Improve profits. Every ASC nurse leader impacts the bottom line through decision making. Staffing, inventory management, the patient experience, and regulatory compliance are critical operational functions within their purview. Nurse leaders who proactively seek to understand the business side of ASCs are able to really understand and measure the impact of their actions and the influence they have directly and indirectly on the ASC financial performance. A grasp of basic finance and accounting affords the clinical director the ability to speak to the center financial health from multiple perspectives and furthers effective communication among the stakeholders.

INVALUABLE LEADERSHIP

Administrators who are observant and actively listen to their staff, focusing on daily operations, and who communicate clearly and frequently, are more likely

to successfully lead the ASC. Successful leaders can then energize staff and create opportunities to improve work processes that ultimately benefit the patient and the center, which will also benefit the staff.

The good news is that individuals can learn to be strong leaders and that it is never too late to cultivate talents and begin a leadership journey. *AE*



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