

# Rural Healthcare *Quality* Network

## **RHQN Quality Newsletter, April 2008**

### **Introductions**

Great things are happening within the RHQN. We now have a full time Executive Director. Randy Benson started on April 1. Randy comes to the RHQN with twenty three years of healthcare administration experience. He worked for Empire Health Services in Spokane (Deaconess Medical Center and Spokane Valley Hospital and Medical Center) as Director of Staff Education and then as Vice President for Safety, Quality Improvement and Infection Control. He has a B.S.Ed. in Biology Education, an M.S. in Pathogenic Bacteriology and a Ph.D. in Virology. Randy's wife Judy is the Medical Director of the Internal Medicine Residency program in Spokane.



Randy brings a wealth of understanding of hospitals and in particular quality and safety. He understands the Department of Health survey process. He is also an expert in Joint Commission for those of you becoming accredited. In addition, he is a Six Sigma green belt and knowledgeable in Lean for health care. Randy is great at education and helping hospitals make changes.

Randy's highest priority is to visit each RHQN member hospital as soon as possible. He is looking forward to meeting each of you and identifying your specific needs and issues. Randy is convinced that RHQN member facilities provide outstanding care of the highest quality. This needs to be demonstrated to others through documentation of our efforts at improving performance on the various quality indicators. Randy has offices in Seattle and Spokane. Please welcome him when he contacts you and arrives for a visit.

Randy can be contacted at (206) 577-1821 or [RandyB@wsha.org](mailto:RandyB@wsha.org).

### *On-Site Hospital Visits*

After being on the job for just one week, Randy was out in RHQN members hospitals providing consultation. Newport and Ritzville were visited last week and Davenport and Colfax will be visited this week. He has been very impressed with the professionalism and quality of care prided by the staff. In his discussions with CEOs, Directors of Nursing and Quality Leaders Randy has identified some common concerns and needs. These include the ongoing need for peer review by Drs. Bloom and Stevenson and their continuing medical staff education via the "Quality Matters" newsletter and other venues. Among the concerns of visited rural hospitals is frustration in having to enter quality data in multiple locations and/or difficulty with getting the database to 'take' their data. A source of anxiety is converting the 'mountains' of data collected into meaningful information the public will understand and appreciate.

Randy will be contacting you to visit over the next several months. In the meantime, do not hesitate to call if you have questions or specific needs. Those needs might be a Department of Health Survey or how to do a root cause analysis. Randy is also an excellent speaker and is available to speak with your medical staff or board.

### *RHQN Commentary - The Patient/Customer's Perspective on Quality*

There are many valid definitions of quality in healthcare. If you asked a room full of healthcare professionals to write their definitions you would see a common thread. That thread is related to technical or professional skills, educational background and previous job experiences. The technical/professional definition of healthcare quality is supported by the Joint Commission, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Department of Health. In a nut shell, the definition is "providing the right service, at the appropriate time and doing it correctly the first time" (the best x-ray, the correct lab chemistry results, the correct diet, the correct medication given at the right time).

But, what about the customer's definition of healthcare quality? If the patient/customer is not a healthcare professional can they make valid judgments about lab test, x-ray or diet quality? No, they can't! If it's not based on a technical/professional definition of healthcare quality, how does the patient/customer define quality?

Before we explore the answer we need to think about where the customer is coming from (what is their state of mind when they get to the hospital). Healthcare is one of the few businesses where the customers come "pre-stressed." There are no good connotations to coming to a hospital. They don't

think the food is that good, they don't come to look at the art work on the walls, they don't even come just to enjoy the peaceful and tranquil surroundings. Because healthcare customers/patients arrive pre-stressed, they may not remember where they parked their car, which door they came in, or where to go once they get into hospital or clinic.

So, back to the question. How does the patient/customer define quality in healthcare? The patient/customer's definition is based on classic principles of customer service. Staff needs to be able to recognize and respond to the customer's stress if they are to provide quality patient care/customer service. If a customer stops a member of the staff in the hallway and asks where the nearest restroom is, does the staff member know? A member of the staff that responds by saying "I don't know" or "it's down the hall, you can't miss it" sends a very clear message. If the staff is so uninformed that they don't know where the restroom is or are so lacking in ambition that they can't take time to show the customer where the restroom is, they lack the ambition or knowledge to provide quality care to the customer or their loved one who may be a patient in the facility.

From the patient's/customer's point of view, quality *is* based on the staff's knowledge of where the customer parked their car, where the restrooms are, where the customer can go to have a cigarette, where they can get something to eat, where they can get a newspaper and "how they can get out of this place." All this happens before the customer becomes a patient. We live and work under two different yet parallel definitions of quality and if we let either one slip, we'll hear about it!

*Next month, how the patient defines 'quality' at the bedside.*

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If you have ideas, comments, questions or concerns about the patient's perceptions of quality care, contact Randy Benson, Executive Director, RHQN, at [randyb@wsha.org](mailto:randyb@wsha.org).