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A CLIENT STORY

A Story of Customer Excellence Through Continuous Improvement



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Grace Hospital, a prominent private surgical hospital in New Zealand, has made remarkable strides in patient care and satisfaction. In the last two years they've improved their already outstanding Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 92 to a scarcely believable 95.

Delve into the strategies and initiative behind their success, highlighting their commitment to continuous improvement, effective communication and embedding patient feedback into their operational ethos.

About Grace Hospital

Grace Hospital is a leading private surgical facility, owned by Evolution and Southern Cross. The facility is equipped with nine operating theatres, 50 inpatient beds and three procedure rooms. With a relatively flat management structure, the hospital integrates clinical and senior managers to maintain streamlined operations.

NPS Improvement: A Reflection of Continuous Improvement

Grace Hospital's rise in NPS from 92 to 95 over a two year period is a testament to their unwavering commitment to continuous improvement. But this doesn't happen by chance. Their culture of excellence is deeply embedded in their operational framework, ensuring that every patient interaction is optimised for quality care.

The hospital's success is not attributed to a single initiative but to a holistic approach encompassing every aspect of the patient journey.

Marie Russell is Grace Hospital's Safety, Quality and Capability Manager. Supported by Lou Higgins, the Safety, Quality and Risk Facilitator, along with a clinical educator, infection control nurse and health and safety coordinator, her team takes responsibility for hospital wide processes and communication.

A cornerstone of Grace Hospital's continuous improvement strategy is their robust patient feedback mechanism. Managed by Lou, the hospital transitioned from paper-based to electronic surveys around 2012, significantly enhancing the efficiency and accuracy of feedback collection.

A monthly review of survey responses allows the hospital to promptly address any concerns, ensuring that every piece of feedback, whether positive or negative, is acted upon.

“We have weekly meetings to look at our notifications (action alerts), and we make sure that any new initiatives relevant to each department are communicated across those departments.”

Hospital-wide focus

Marie Russell emphasises the importance of communication in ensuring that all departments are positioned to contribute to the wider goals of the organisation. A key part of her philosophy is that every department has an important part to play in ensuring great patient outcomes and so it takes a united team effort to make it happen:

“We constantly emphasise that no one is more important than anyone else because to get all these great stories, we depend on everyone from our pre-assessment team, the person who greets the patient at the front door and everyone who cares for the patient until they’re discharged. We also have excellent feedback about our non clinical teams, our housekeeping and catering team frequently score over 98%.”



Marie and Lou emphasise the collaborative effort required to maintain high standards at Grace Hospital. Their team ensures that new initiatives and feedback are communicated effectively across departments. Marie explains:

“We report positive stories every month using the Cemplicity template and any of the negative things that we think need addressing are communicated individually to department managers. We also discuss any trends or any issues at department meetings.”

It's not enough just to ask

Grace Hospital's survey programme is a critical tool for maintaining high standards and identifying areas for improvement. The programme's success is attributed to the dedicated efforts of Lou, who ensures that the feedback is not only collected but also disseminated and acted upon effectively. Marie highlights:

“Lou manages it very well. She's got a real dedication to the patients and she's constantly reinforcing that 'there's no point doing a survey if we are not going to do anything with it.'”

The feedback process involves monthly quality reports, which include patient survey results and trends. These reports are shared widely within the hospital, ensuring that staff at all levels are informed and can act on the feedback.

Maintaining high response rates

The hospital has seen an increase in response rates from 35% to an average of 45-50%, something they put down to their concerted focus on it being a team effort and embedding feedback gathering into the right processes. This includes highlighting the survey in a checklist for day stay patients and promoting the survey within the hospital so that all staff know about it.

Lou emphasises the importance of promoting the survey within the hospital to drive active engagement among the team:

“We communicate the results widely and regularly. So it's in the forefront of people's minds that we are doing the patient survey and that it's important that we respond to the patient survey”.

Specific patient-led improvements

Patient experience is at the core of Grace Hospital and its staff with Cemplicity being one of the key tools in their continuous improvement strategy. Lou recounts a project that wouldn't have happened without a patient raising concerns through the survey:

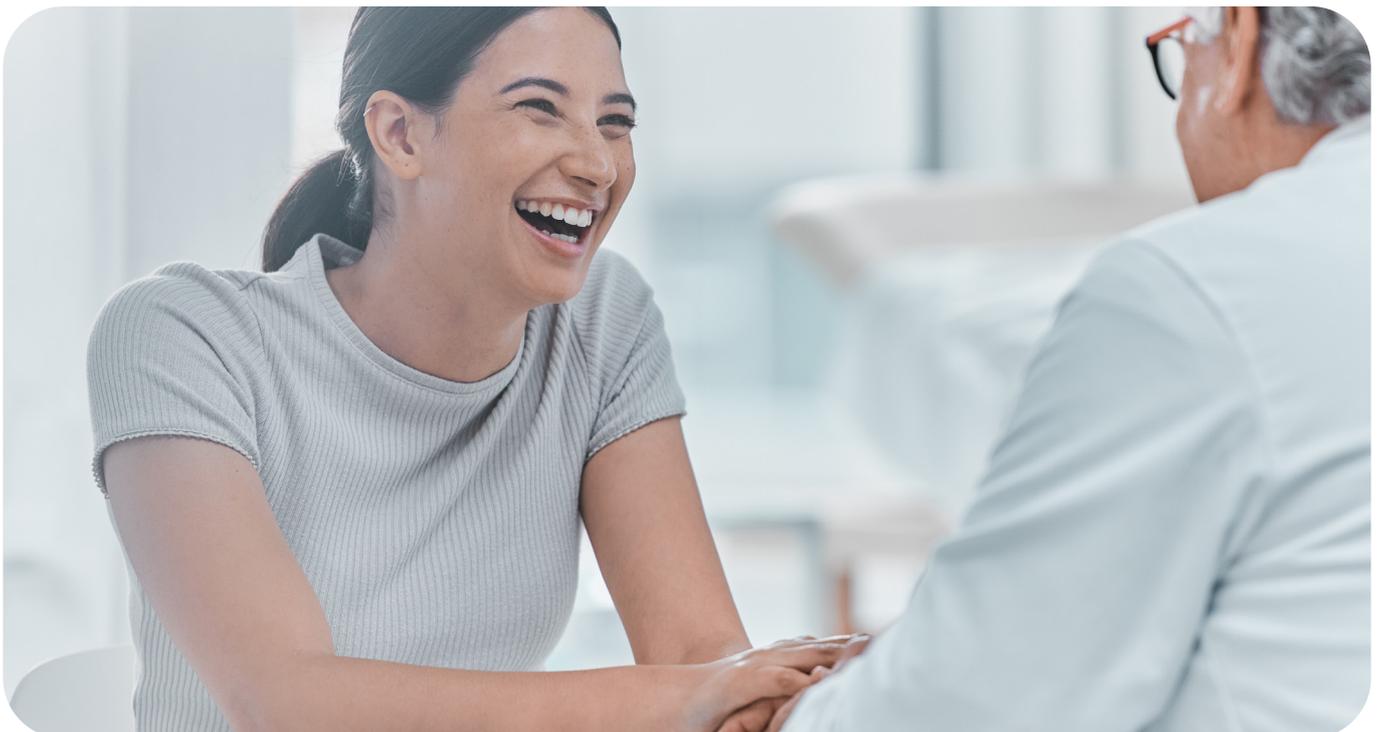
“We’ve just completed a whole project on gluten-free accreditation working with our kitchen staff. That’s one of the biggest things that we’ve done as a result of the patient survey and the patient’s comments.”

Another example is the improvement of discharge processes based on patient feedback. The hospital developed a comprehensive pain medication chart to improve patient understanding and safety.

Marie explains:

“The nurses on the ward developed a really good pain medication chart which explains exactly what medications the patients have had, what they’re being discharged with, and what they can take together.”

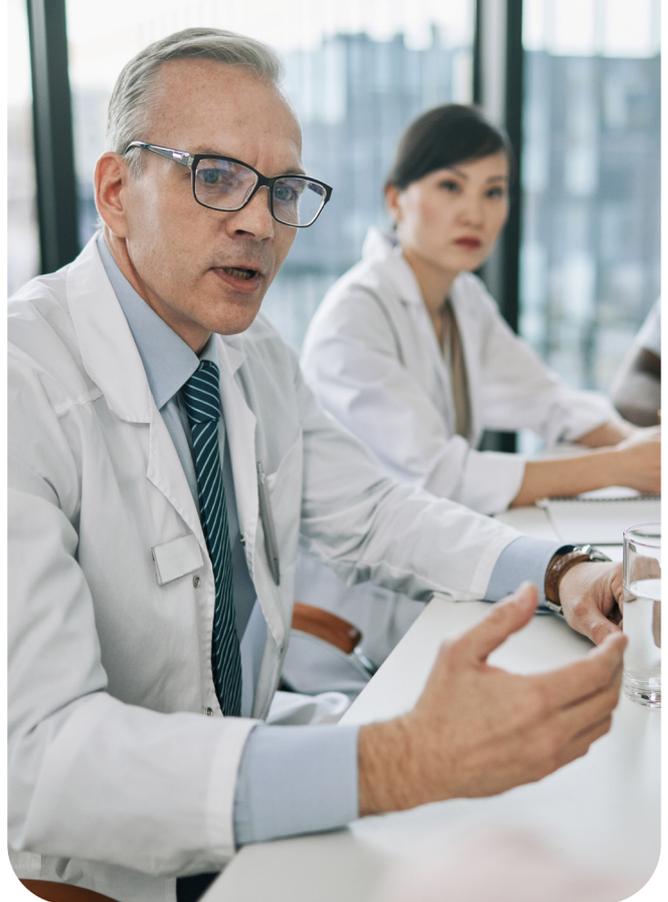
While each of these issues was only raised by a small number of patients, being able to capture individual perspectives allowed the Grace Hospital team to identify the issue and then to investigate the opportunity to improve.



Benchmarking

Survey results and relevant statistics are reported to the board, and partner companies through national forums. Continuous internal benchmarking with partner companies, Southern Cross and Evolution Hospitals, allows Grace Hospital to compare their performance against other hospitals. Marie explains:

“We have forums with the two partner companies so we’re able to complete internal benchmarking as well.”



Building a culture of excellence

Grace Hospital’s culture of excellence, with high standards and attention, is deeply ingrained in their culture and reflected in the continuous review and improvement of care and processes. Marie reflects:

“When I first joined Grace Hospital, I was absolutely blown away by the attention to detail and the clinical care. And that’s continued with the expansion of the hospital.”

Their proactive continuous improvement approach leads to an excellent patient experience across the patient journey, from pre-admission through to discharge. Recognising the unique needs of paediatric patients, particularly those with autism and special needs, they are currently refining the pre-assessment process.

This proactive approach ensures that the care provided is tailored to the specific requirements of each child, minimising stress for both the patients and their parents. Marie explains:

“One of the projects we are undertaking at the moment is a project looking at caring for our ASD children. We’re improving our preoperative questions so that their parents can tell us anything specific about their child. This ensures we provide the special care these children need.”

Key learnings for other hospitals



Continuous improvement culture

Embed a culture of continuous improvement and attention to detail across the entire organisation.



Engagement strategies

Patients need prompting about surveys to ensure high response rates.



Responding to action items

Listening and addressing problems when they arise.



Benchmarking

Regular internal benchmarking with partner organisations maintains competitive performance.



Effective communication

The key to success is regular and transparent communication of feedback and new initiatives to all staff levels.



Tailored initiatives

Use patient feedback to drive specific improvement projects, such as gluten-free accreditation and enhanced discharge processes.



Robust feedback mechanism

You need to implement a reliable patient feedback system to gather actionable insights.



Comprehensive reporting

Monthly quality reports and trend analysis keeps staff informed and accountable.

Conclusion

Grace Hospital's impressive NPS and sustained high performance are a direct result of their dedication to continuous improvement, effective communication and a robust feedback mechanism. Their holistic approach to patient care, from pre-assessment to discharge, ensures that every patient receives the highest quality of care. By embedding patient feedback into their processes and maintaining a culture of excellence, Grace Hospital is showing the path forward for patient-centred healthcare providers worldwide.

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