



# Case Study

## Cultivating Excellence in Patient Experience

### System Information

Hackensack Meridian Health

### TeamHealth Services

Emergency Medicine

Pediatric Emergency Medicine

Hospital Medicine

OB/GYN Hospitalist



At a critical time when the emergency department patient experience scores had fallen below target, due to a period of excessive volume, staff shortage and other disruptive forces, we began the journey of deploying the A-PEX communication and behavioral tools as part of a comprehensive Emergency Department Performance Improvement Process. The framework of behavioral standards and communication tools proved very powerful in driving improvement in our patient experience. Patient experience scores related to physician communications have shown an impressive upward trend since implementation and patient complaints dropped. We would recommend the tools and approach to any emergency department team seeking to make improvements in the patient experience.

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## Challenge

Inconsistent caregiver communication within the hospital emergency departments was causing magnification of already-stressful patient experiences. Imagine that you're a patient, in pain, seeing multiple caregivers for only a few minutes each. Each caregiver has information to share with you, and some of that information is new and perhaps difficult to comprehend. In many instances, these patient experiences may evolve from stressful to negative.

## Solution

Patient experiences are impacted in part by how clinicians communicate a consistent, positive message (perceived as empathetic when viewed through the patient's perspective). From the process improvement aspect, staff buy-in leads to a more positive atmosphere and improved quality with a "snowball effect."

Years of work and refinement went into creating TeamHealth's new patient experience program, A-PEX (Achieving Peak Performance in Patient Experience). Through A-PEX, patients feel better about the care they're receiving from clinicians. In turn, clinicians are energized by the results they're seeing in their patient interactions. This ultimately leads to better clinical outcomes because of the enhanced patient engagement and trust in their providers.

In 2019, leadership from Hackensack Meridian Health (HMH), one of the Northeast's leading health systems, reached out to its integrated services partner, TeamHealth, to address patient experience scores inside some of the system's busiest emergency departments. Today, at Riverview, JFK and Raritan Bay hospitals, service line and clinical leaders have refined program materials, tracking methodology and rounding techniques, as well as data analysis and reporting.

## Results

The success of this innovative program is now creating win-wins in the departments and hospitals where it's been introduced.

Vital patient experience feedback continues to evolve, enabling consistent improvements to A-PEX's various assessment elements; making this program a dynamic, influential tool among HMH facilities. In particular, the A-PEX program has been instrumental in helping HMH hospitals improve their Net Promoter Scores (NPS). NPS is an important measure of the customer experience, reflecting consumer loyalty, likelihood to return and other important measures of overall customer satisfaction.

Early successes from the program's rollout include:

- Each hospital participating in the program has seen double digit increases in NPS, with each hospital achieving or exceeding their NPS 2020 goal
- Clinicians feel empowered to utilize more efficient communication techniques with patients; techniques which also translate into better communication among colleagues, associates and family members
- Higher clinician engagement scores and reduced clinician burnout that is so common in emergency medicine