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Improving Surgeon Satisfaction in the OR Day to Day

There are numerous factors that contribute to surgeon satisfaction, and your ability to influence several of them can positively impact patient care and improve operating room processes.

Surgeons can often feel like they are a solo act, which can contribute to feelings of isolation and dissatisfaction; however, it is more accurate to think of them as the conductor who directs the performance of the OR team, so working

to keep their satisfaction levels high results in everyone working in harmony.

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influence several of them can positively impact patient care and improve operating room processes. As an example, operating rooms with high surgeon satisfaction consistently have reliable start times. The following provides tips on how to help surgeons in your hospital excel in their conductor role and improve their satisfaction.

STREAMLINE YOUR OPERATING ROOM PROCESSES

Surgeon performances will be improved, as will their satisfaction, if you maintain a predictable and consistent operating room scheduling system. You should strive for surgeries to start on time and focus on turning the room over as quickly as possible. This attentiveness demonstrates to surgeons that you value their

time and are contributing to their productivity.

As an example of the importance of efficient operating room processes, the Stanford University Department of Anesthesia conducted a surgeon satisfaction survey to identify the performance standards most important to surgeons. While “Ability to calmly manage a crisis” and “Patient quick to awaken” were the top two attributes, among those that tied for third were items related to process efficiencies, including timely starts, short turnaround times, and short time to position, prepare, and drape.¹

In addition to a predictable and consistent operating room schedule, implementing swing, or parallel, operating rooms also greatly improves efficiency and helps eliminate unproductive surgeon time. In one study, the swing room model achieved a 33% increase in cases when compared to a standard operating room model.²

Scheduling flexibility and a willingness to accommodate requests are also important to surgeons. When a surgeon asks you to help address a surgical challenge or to schedule an urgent case, work to help meet their needs. Your assistance will further establish trust and enhance your partnership.

KEEP SURGEONS INFORMED

Surgeons need to know you have their best interests in mind and you value their input, so communicate with them frequently, such as proactively asking for their opinions and recommendations, especially related to

operating room improvement plans.

One of the best ways to promote surgeon communication is by conducting surgeon satisfaction surveys. At a minimum, annually poll surgeons to identify areas that meet their needs and areas that could be improved to better support them. While written surveys are a viable option, consider conducting verbal surveys, which will allow surgeons to be more expressive of their experiences and expectations. Once plans are established to address the concerns voiced during surveys or other interactions, present your plans to them to demonstrate you are listening to their input and are taking action to address their areas of concern.

You should also encourage operating room directors and executive team members to frequently interact with surgeons. Team members should ask surgeons about their experiences using operating rooms at the hospital and if there is anything that can be provided to better support their patients. Having staff members establish a rapport with surgeons helps increase surgeon satisfaction and better informs you of how you can continue to improve processes to address surgeon and patient needs.

Finally, you should ask your primary scrub nurse or circulating nurse about a surgeon's demeanor or if the nurse is aware of any issues that consistently frustrate surgeons. Your nurses may be aware of small concerns that can easily be resolved. Surgeons will appreciate your ability to identify and address issues

without the surgeons needing to bring them to your attention.

PROVIDE THE TOOLS AND STAFF SURGEONS NEED

Operating room capabilities are constantly advancing, such as the implementation of smart surgical suites offering video conferencing with offsite specialists who can observe the surgery remotely and the ability for the surgical team to instantly access patient imaging, test records, or other information from the hospital information system. Supporting surgeons with leading technologies such as these demonstrates your dedication to providing the tools surgeons need to increase productivity and provide improved patient care.

Consult with surgeons to identify tools they don't currently have access to and communicate your efforts to acquire those tools to your surgeons. If you can't acquire those tools, explain why and offer other options to improve operating processes and productivity until those tools can be obtained. Be honest with surgeons if they request changes or equipment that you won't be able to address and explain why. Your honesty will be appreciated, and you will avoid establishing expectations you won't be able to meet.

Enhancing tools outside of the operating room can also help improve surgeon satisfaction and productivity. Having access to electronic medical records, enhanced nurse call

solutions, and mobile device notification support are ways to increase the productivity of all staff members. As an example, some surgeons may appreciate receiving text messages notifying them of upcoming surgery times to ensure they arrive at the OR on time.

Employing the best staff members to support surgeons is as important as having the best equipment. Staff members who understand the steps of each procedure and can anticipate the surgeon's next request will enhance the surgeon's experience and improve procedure efficiency. Surgeons will be more confident during operating room procedures if they trust the staff supporting them and their patients. One way to better support surgeons is by consistently using the same staff partner, who will learn each surgeon's preferences and communication methods, allowing their staff to better interact with the surgeon. Partner knowledge will expand the more they work with the surgeon, so the surgeon's experience will continuously improve over time.

SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION

Small gestures can go a long way to showing your appreciation. Encourage staff members to thank surgeons for bringing their patients to your hospital. You can also thank them for starting on time, finishing on time, and for providing excellent care to patients. Small amenities can also demonstrate your appreciation. If a surgery unexpectedly runs long and through lunch time, have food delivered. Also have coffee and other snacks available if the surgeon is booked throughout

We're aligned to your goals



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the day. Small amenities require a small cost but can have big satisfaction benefits.

SpecialtyCare has more than a thousand clinicians working directly with OR teams and physicians in operating rooms across the nation, so we observe opportunities to improve surgeon satisfaction on a daily basis. As such, our staff can help improve satisfaction and productivity in your hospitals through a variety of ways, such as:

- Assisting to achieve on-time starts by driving operating room processes
- Improving tool accessibility by preparing sets prior to the procedure and in the

- Enhancing the style, method, and tone of communications to efficiently deliver data to result-oriented surgeons throughout their procedures

By integrating our clinical services in your operating room, we can help increase surgeon satisfaction while improving your operating room efficiencies and lowering costs.

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¹Vitez, T., & Marcario, A. (1998). "Setting Performance Standards for an Anesthesia Department." J Clin Anesth, 10, 166-175.

²Mercereau, P., Lee, B., Head, S., & Schwarz, S. (2012). "A Regional Anesthesia-Based "Swing" Operating Room Model Reduces Non-Operative Time in a Mixed Orthopedic Inpatient/ Outpatient Population." Can J Anesth, 59(10), 943-949. doi:10.1007/s12630-012-9765-x

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