
COASTAL VOICES: Why healthcare quality matters to me – and should to you, too

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It's not hard to explain the value of quality in healthcare. High-quality care improves outcomes, changes lives – and often saves them.

When Sutter Coast Hospital receives recognition from within our own system and from national organizations for the quality of the care we provide this community, it means the world to me. It's a visible demonstration to the people we serve of how invested we are in their well-being. But there's another demonstration of the quality of our care that's also caught my eye recently. We have an extraordinary group of staff and physicians, with that all-too-rare combination of compassion and expertise. "Care" is not just something they provide – it's something they do.

The best way to understand that is to know that they trust their colleagues to treat them and, even more importantly, their children when they are ill or injured. I can think of two colleagues who have recently seen things from the patient's perspective after bringing in kids with a broken arm – classic casualty of an active summer! I know firsthand that they left not only grateful for the care their children received, but even more convinced of the quality of the care our hospital provides overall.

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality defines quality healthcare as "doing the right thing for the right patient, at the right time, in the right way to achieve the best possible results." I don't know that there's a nobler goal than that.

There's a reason "excellence" is right there in Sutter Health's mission statement: "We enhance the well-being of people in the communities we serve through a not-for-profit commitment to compassion and excellence in healthcare services." And there's a reason that "Excellence & Quality" made the cut when it came to defining the core values that guide our organization.

Most recently, the American Heart Association recognized Sutter Coast Hospital for consistently applying the American College of Cardiology guidelines when treating patients with heart failure. The 2019 Get With The Guidelines® awards also recognize hospitals that maintain high standards in the treatment of heart failure and deliver evidence-based care. Research shows that hospitals adhering to clinical measures through this initiative can often see fewer readmissions and lower mortality rates.

Meanwhile, UDS, a nonprofit organization that maintains the world's largest database for medical rehabilitation outcomes, ranks Coast's rehabilitation clinic in the top quarter of peers across the country. The

measures include achieving patient goals at discharge, the amount of functional improvements made and level of independence achieved upon returning home, as well as the percentage of patients that are returning home to their community.

And our own Office of Patient Experience is applauding Coast for work as varied as preventing infections and driving down the rate of first-time C-sections.

Clearly, I get a little bit excited about these achievements. Some of that is professional, of course. As Coast's Quality Manager, I can't take credit for these accomplishments – that goes to the incredible staff I am blessed to work with every day – but I do take responsibility for them. I entered into the quality field 12 years ago, due simply to my constantly taking on projects with an eye toward how to do things more efficiently, more effectively, or simply...better.

I've been a Sutter patient. I've had family members, neighbors and friends who have been Sutter patients. The quality of the care that I receive and they receive is very real to me.

For me, my career in quality boils down to wanting to leave something better than how I found it. And I can't think of a better, more important place to do that than in healthcare and for our community.

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