

## North Memorial Health (Robbinsdale, MN)

*Strategies for Improving Care Team Communication & Patient Experience*



### OVERVIEW

Across the country, physician communication with patients is a universal opportunity. North Memorial Medical Center successfully focused on their HCAHPS Physician Communication scores and implemented some proven tactics yielding measurable results. At DTA Associates, patient experience is a passion, and helping organizations to enhance their performance in this area is a core skill of our team. DTA has proven success in helping clients attain these critical patient experience capabilities. Since the training, more than 500 providers and staff were shadowed by a Customer Experience Coach across 11 different departments. After each observation, the coach and team member debriefed on the personal strengths and opportunities observed. Each participant was sent an evaluation form as well as their own written report. This written report was kept confidential between the coach and the participant.

### SITUATION

North Memorial Medical Center engaged DTA Associates to provide an initial assessment and roadmap for Patient Experience in the fall of 2012. As part of that work, DTA noted the need to focus on Physician Communication and recommended a spectrum of strategies for the organization to adopt.

“DTA has very knowledgeable staff that have walked in our shoes. They are not only aware of the key issues and initiatives around patient experience but they are very helpful in providing roadmaps and tools to enable us to be successful after their consulting is over.”

—JEFF WICKLANDER, PRESIDENT, NORTH MEMORIAL MEDICAL CENTER

“DTA has helped us develop and implement strategies and tactics to improve our patient’s experiences. They worked with us to help engage our physicians. Together we were able to develop our vision for the future and put in place incremental actions and plans to get started quickly.”

—DR. ANDREW HOULTON, VICE PRESIDENT OF MEDICAL AFFAIRS, NORTH MEMORIAL MEDICAL CENTER

“DTA’s team can improve patient experience by relating to staff and identifying key driving opportunities for sustainable improvement.”

— NANCY HENKES, PATIENT EXPERIENCE PROGRAM MANAGER, NORTH MEMORIAL MEDICAL CENTER

### STRATEGY AND APPROACH

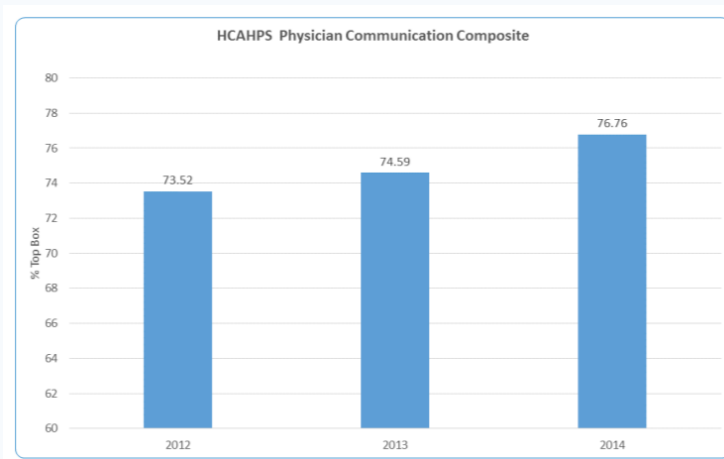
North Memorial employed several strategies to improve their physician communication including:

- 2-to-Dos (short newsletters written by physicians for physicians regarding key communication tips and techniques)
- Discussing physician group level data at Med Exec meetings
- Writing thank-you notes to physicians who were positively named in patient surveys
- Starting meetings with patient comments
- Offering “Leadership Engagement Experience: A Day of Education for Physician Leaders” centered on patient experience, physician communication and quality
- Placing a care board in the physician’s lounge with tips and examples of what to write

## COACHING COMMUNICATION

One of the key strategies was offering doctors the opportunity to participate in Physician Coaching with DTA. North Memorial leaders presented the coaching opportunity to the entire group and allowed interested physicians to sign-up. A total of 25 providers were shadowed by a DTA coach between February and October of 2013 with more than 150 patient-provider interactions observed. After each observation, the DTA coach and provider debriefed on the personal strengths and opportunities observed, and each provider was sent an evaluation form as well as their own written report. This written report was kept confidential between the coach and the physician and provided a valuable summary take-away for the participant. Physician comments on their coaching:

- “I thought it was helpful to have someone observe and make suggestions on my communication style.”
- “[The Coach] provided very specific and useful feedback.”



## RESULTS

In a composite where the nation moves at a snail’s pace (.12% top box per 9 month reporting period), North Memorial realized an increase of 1.07% top box in their HCAHPS Physician Communication scores in 2013. They have sustained this performance into 2014 seeing an additional 2.17 % top box increase. This equates to 59 Percentile improvement. According to Janiece Gray, Founding Partner of DTA and leader of the Patient Experience practice: “The hallmark of our success is enabling our clients to continue to realize improvements and see results long after our engagement. North Memorial is such a great example of this in action.” In an era of diminishing resources, healthcare systems are achieving success by utilizing some powerful approaches and best practices to improve physician communication across the continuum. DTA can help maximize your improvement efforts across the patient’s journey.

DTA is a patient-centered quality improvement consultancy serving hospitals, clinics and health care systems. They have core competencies in process and technology improvement aimed at enhancing the patient experience and empowering physicians and other clinical staff to resolve quality shortfalls. Leveraging technology and analytics that engage physicians and drive process improvements, they help clients make progress on specific goals, ultimately leaving them with the skills they need to achieve goals independently and with confidence.