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## **Improving HCAHPS Scores Through Patient-Centered Initiatives at a Community Hospital**

**Introduction:** This project examines the impact of unit leadership and patient population characteristics on Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) scores at a community hospital in North Carolina. Understanding the determinants of HCAHPS scores is essential, as they play a critical role in assessing patient satisfaction, influencing hospital reimbursement, and shaping institutional reputation. The study aims to identify how factors such as leadership practices, patient demographics, and unit classification contribute to variations in patient experience across different hospital units.

**Methods:** A mixed-methods approach was utilized, combining quantitative analysis of HCAHPS survey data from multiple hospital units with qualitative interviews of nurse managers. The quantitative component involved evaluating HCAHPS scores in relation to patient age, race, and LOS to identify trends and disparities. The qualitative interviews explored leadership styles, communication strategies, and staff engagement practices to understand their influence on patient satisfaction outcomes.

**Results:** The analysis revealed that effective unit leadership significantly correlates with higher HCAHPS scores across various departments. Leadership practices characterized by clear communication, shared governance, and active staff involvement were associated with improved patient experiences. Additionally, patient demographics and LOS were found to impact satisfaction levels, with longer stays and diverse patient backgrounds presenting unique challenges. Units that proactively addressed these challenges through tailored strategies and supportive leadership demonstrated better HCAHPS performance.

**Conclusions:** The findings underscore the importance of robust and adaptable leadership and consideration of patient population characteristics in enhancing patient satisfaction. Implementing targeted leadership training programs and promoting strategies addressing specific demographic and care complexity needs can improve HCAHPS scores. Encouraging inter-unit collaboration to share effective practices may further support consistent patient experience enhancements across the hospital.

