



MUHC: Quality in Action Equals Improved Patient Care

“We survey our patients, analyse their replies, and then begin our quality improvement process. The next time we survey patients, we expect to see, and we do see, improved results. That’s quality in action.”

- **Linda Maruska**
McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) Quality Advisor

About the MUHC

Located in Montreal, Quebec, the **McGill University Health Centre (MUHC)** is one of the most comprehensive academic health centres in North America. The MUHC’s multidisciplinary teams provide care to adults and children in the Montreal region and to patients from across Quebec through seven clinical missions: Pediatric Medicine (The Montreal Children’s Hospital), Medicine, Surgery, Neurosciences, Women’s Health, Mental Health and Cancer Care.

The Research Institute of the MUHC is an internationally recognized biomedical and healthcare research centre supporting over 500 researchers as well as 1,000 graduate and post-doctoral students. It operates more than 300 laboratories devoted to a broad spectrum of fundamental and clinical research. In addition, the MUHC prides itself on the quality and rigour of its clinical and scientific training.

Each year, close to 3,000 people train at the MUHC, including 825 medical and surgical residents, 1,075 nurses, 450 medical students and 525 health students.

The Quality Mission

The MUHC quality team includes a director of quality, a quality manager for adult patients and one for pediatrics, quality advisors for each MUHC clinical mission, two risk advisors and two administrative technicians. The quality advisors work with patient quality teams in each mission to establish and evaluate patient quality standards.

To obtain patient feedback so that satisfaction can be evaluated, the MUHC uses the **Androfact™ Healthcare Survey System**, from Agili-T Health Solutions, said **Linda Maruska**, *MUHC Quality Advisor*. Surveys of the major mission teams at the MUHC are conducted every two years. This gives the



team time to analyze the results and brainstorm and implement change before the changes are assessed. It also leads to a program and culture of continuous improvement. "The surveys enable us to take the pulse of quality throughout the hospital. Then we focus on implementing the right improvements for the right reasons," said Ms. Maruska.

Patients at the hospital, or their family members, complete surveys concerning specific aspects of their treatment. In addition, statistically significant samples of discharged patients receive survey phone calls from managers or associate directors. The surveys cover issues such as overall satisfaction with treatment, pain control, doctor availability and other quality issues.

"We survey our patients, analyze their replies and then begin our quality improvement process. But there is no point in taking action if you are not going to measure the impact of your actions. The next time we survey patients, we measure the results of our actions. We expect to see, and we do see, improved results. That's quality in action," said Ms. Maruska.

"The survey results serve as a catalyst for brainstorming ideas that facilitate change and improve quality. Without the surveys, we'd be guessing," she added.

Survey Validation

Maruska finds that the Androfact validated question banks cover "the vast majority of the MUHC survey areas." All the questions in the survey have been validated for the healthcare industry and can easily be customized for each mission, service area or team. In addition, new questions can be added to the survey to cover issues specific to MUHC and the province of Quebec. For instance, MUHC asks questions to determine if patients were able to receive healthcare in the language of their choice.

"The survey questions are very good, yet there is still a great deal of flexibility, which means we don't have to reinvent the wheel. Instead, we can add custom questions to our surveys as needed," said Ms. Maruska.

Survey replies are entered into the Androfact database. Results are analyzed by the Quality Department and then shared with quality teams in the appropriate mission area. The Mission team takes the results and any recommendations to the Quality Committee. Together, all those responsible for quality improvements work out solutions to problems that need to be addressed. "We survey aspects where we think we can make a difference, and once the survey results are in, we work as a team to implement appropriate changes," said Ms. Maruska.



Beyond Patients

Patient satisfaction is an important part of what the MUHC is all about. However, the MUHC approach to quality also includes staff, interns and other departments because the quality of the services that healthcare professionals receive from various departments within the institution has a bearing on retention, morale and, ultimately, on the quality of patient care. For instance, if nurses and doctors receive medication from the pharmacy in a timely and accurate manner, patient care improves as a consequence. With that in mind, MUHC surveys healthcare professionals to see if delivery of medications and other services is adequate.

“As a teaching hospital, we know that our residents are the future of healthcare and that they have an impact on the day-to-day quality of care that patients receive,” said Ms. Maruska. That is why MUHC surveys residents to get their feedback on orientation programs, working conditions, meal plans, sleeping quarters and even parking. Based on the results of the last survey, MUHC made changes to the quality and flexibility of its resident meal plan.

From Survey to Results

Change often occurs slowly at large institutions and budgets can be an issue in the healthcare system. MUHC cannot and does not make changes on a whim. Instead, the survey results are treated seriously and are used as the catalyst for changes – large and small.

For example, after a survey indicated that most patients found the physical appearance of the Dialysis Unit less than bright and cheerful, the physical environment was renovated and upgraded. When a survey indicated that patients were having difficulty finding the Urology Clinic, MUHC improved its signage in the area to better indicate where personnel were located. “When you work at a hospital, you know how to get around. Sometimes it takes a survey to remind you that your patients are not as familiar with the surroundings as the workers are. You need to know that a problem exists before you can fix it, and the survey results pointed us in the right direction,” said Ms. Maruska.

Fixing problems “is not always a question of dollars,” Ms. Maruska added. For instance, the surveys help the MUHC Housekeeping department pinpoint specific areas of the hospital that require greater concentration. Solutions often involve reallocating staff and resources rather than adding additional staff.



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MUHC has been conducting surveys for over six years and working closely with Agili-T to improve the feedback process. "We are a pretty picky bunch and Agili-T has always been open to our suggestions," Ms. Maruska said.

As MUHC continues to survey, the health centre is building quality benchmarks in the various missions and departments. This gives

staff targets to strive for and to improve upon. In addition, since other hospitals in Quebec are using Androfact, Ms. Maruska envisions a day when there will be healthcare system quality benchmarks across users. "This will enable the healthcare system to better serve patients and their families, as well as staff and other stakeholders," she said.

About Agili-T

Agili-T helps organizations capture and measure stakeholder feedback. Its software and services solutions enable organizations to improve stakeholder relationships, customer and employee retention, competitiveness, business processes, operational and financial performance. Agili-T combines science and technology to create effective, actionable stakeholder feedback programs, which enable organizations to perform better.

Androfact™, Agili-T's state-of-the-art surveying system for healthcare providers, is a powerful Web-based surveying application that enables healthcare providers to capture patient and employee feedback to improve the quality of services and patient experiences. Androfact streamlines the entire surveying process including questionnaire design, deployment, data collection, analysis, and management reporting.

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