

Hospital Turns to Patient and Family Advisory Council for Invaluable Feedback

EVERY PERSON WHO WALKS THROUGH THE DOORS OF A HOSPITAL WILL HAVE A UNIQUELY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE. WHETHER THEIR VISIT IS AN INPATIENT STAY OR AN OUTPATIENT PROCEDURE, EVERYONE HOPES AND EXPECTS THAT THEIR TIME AT THE HOSPITAL WILL BE EASY AND POSITIVE.

In June of 2016, Chester County Hospital created a Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) to help ensure that all patients and visitors receive the kind of care and treatment they hope for, expect and deserve. The council, made up of current and former patients and their families, meets monthly with staff and administration to share their insights and recommendations to help enrich the hospital experience.

“The Patient and Advisory Council gives the hospital a more direct way to build patient and family perspectives into daily operations and future endeavors,” says Carli Meister, Director of Customer Relations and Risk. She co-leads the group with Director of Development Tom Gavin. “From workflows to wayfinding, council

members get a behind-the-scenes look at systems and renderings and give their feedback through the eyes of a patient or visitor,” Meister adds. Each person on the 14-member council has a unique relationship with the hospital.



The most important perspective in health care

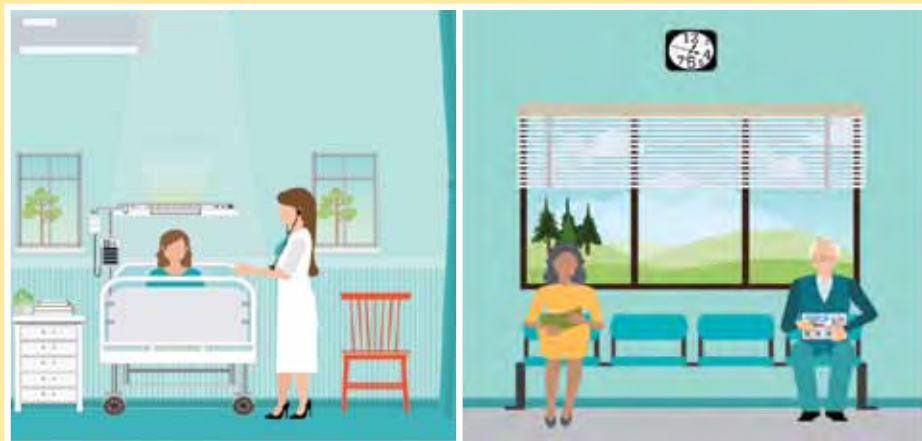
a loved one's point of view

Jean Burke was a Chester County Hospital employee in the 1990s. Her son was a cancer program patient, and her husband has been hospitalized a number of times. Burke currently volunteers in the hospital's Family Lounge and uses her own experiences to help others.

“We've had good hospital encounters and, unfortunately, some bad ones. That's the reason I wanted to be involved with this committee,” says Burke. “Our not-so-good experiences were usually the result of a staff member not being able to relate to our family's point of view. I'm proud of this hospital and its staff for trying to do things better and for wanting everyone to have a good stay.”



Burke's input was especially helpful when the PFAC was asked to weigh in on the Abramson Cancer Center at Chester County Hospital's plans for improvements. She was able to reflect upon her son's experience, and share her perspective as his family member. As a result, Burke offered valuable first-hand observations and suggestions.



an extended stay experience

Jennifer Kash is a long-time resident of West Chester, whose relationship with the hospital began when her mother worked in Radiology. But prior to the birth of Jennifer's own son, she didn't have a lot of first-hand experience with the hospital. Kash gave birth prematurely at just 24 weeks. Her baby, Bryce, lived in the NICU for five months, undergoing many difficult therapies and two major surgeries. Today, Bryce is a healthy and happy kindergartener and the big brother to his 3-year-old sister.

"The year Bryce was born, we spent Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's, and all the days in between, in the NICU with the staff. Everyone was amazing. The doctors and nurses didn't just take care of our son, they took care of my husband and me too. They were just so kind to our family, and some of these relationships still remain," says Kash.

them... but, if it does happen to you, the care you receive really matters. I want to help make sure other people's experiences are as positive as mine."

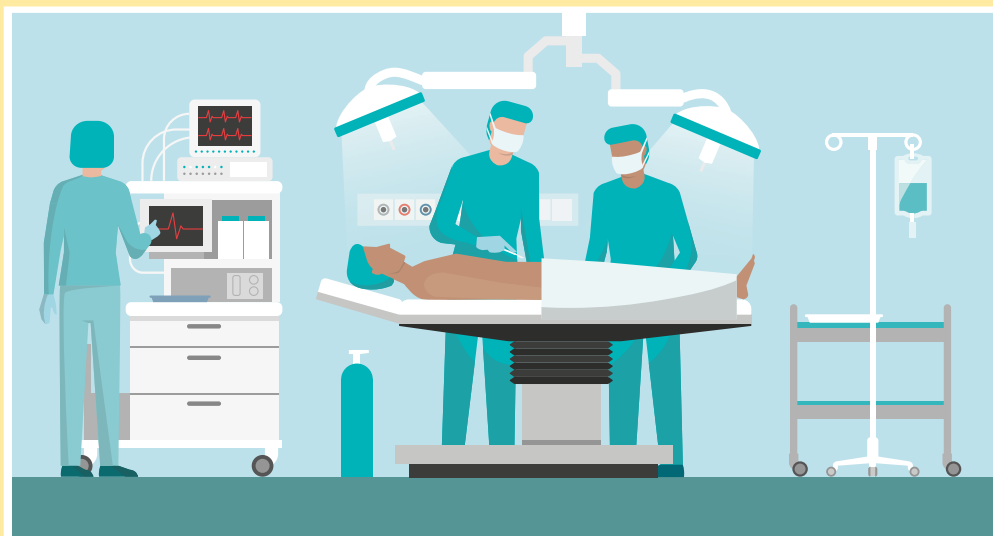
Kash is a tremendous asset as the PFAC reviews the upcoming expansion plans for the NICU. Recently, she spoke about her extended stay during a Nursing Symposium at the hospital. To hear Kash's point of view about the impact the staff has on their patients deeply affected the nurses at the symposium. Her experience demonstrated that attention to the details matter.

a caring community member

Debbie Hess has been watching Chester County Hospital evolve since she moved to the area as a young mother more than three decades ago. Hess began her relationship with the hospital as a volunteer. She then joined

the Women's Auxiliary, serving in different leadership roles including President.

"Over the years, the demographics of Chester County have changed so much and the community has grown. I'm amazed at the thoughtfulness of the hospital, and how it has made adjustments within its structure and organization to meet those ever-changing needs," says Hess. "All the while, it has held on to its patient-centered culture and its commitment to the community."



"Having such a long, extended stay makes my input somewhat unique on the council. There aren't many people who have had that kind of experience with a loved one, certainly not many between the ages of 35 to 45. People think what happened to us could never happen to

Currently, Hess is working with fellow council members to evaluate the patient discharge process. The group is looking at how the hospital transitions inpatients back to their homes or to a skill nursing facility.

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Co-leader Tom Gavin explains, "Council members sat and listened with willing patients while the nurses walked them through their discharge instructions. This allowed the council to observe the process in action and get real-time feedback." The PFAC then made follow-up phone calls to those patients to see if they retained the information they received. "Once the group finishes collecting all the



necessary results, they will review their findings and make recommendations to the administration for improving the discharge process," he adds. "This insight is invaluable."

The PFAC is also testing new campus signage and the wayfinding instructions needed for the extensive expansion project underway at the hospital. This improvement plan includes relocating the main entrance and transporting visitors, via a shuttle, to and from the front door and the parking lot. The PFAC provided suggestions on everything from where signs should be located to the order in which destinations should be listed on interior signs.



"We represent the voice of our community, and the hospital's decision-makers are listening."

first-hand experiences

Members personally tested all signage and wayfinding systems prior to the expansion groundbreaking and invited friends in the community to help test out the signs. Their helpers were each given a fictitious assignment and asked to

independently get from point A to point B. The council did not guide their volunteers, but simply observed and documented their wayfinding experiences and then noted any challenges they faced. Findings and recommendations were then shared with management.

"It was like a scavenger hunt, and we were just along for the ride to see what happened. We looked at things like whether or not the signage was adequate and if it was user-friendly," says Jean Burke. "We want it to be simple for people. There are already enough complications in life... how to get around a hospital should not be one of them." Chester County Hospital has other projects in progress or planned for the Patient and Family Advisory Council in the near future. From the beginning, the council has been embraced by the staff.

Many departments are eager to work with the group and get their guidance." There are lots of positive changes that are going to transpire because of this council. The hospital is looking ahead and asking for our input in advance so they do not have to find out later that

something doesn't work from the standpoint of the patient or family," says Debbie Hess. "We represent the voice of our community, and the hospital's decision-makers are listening."

by Beth Eburn