

Emotional Care Pathways

This practice has been endorsed by the National Patients' Association of Canada & the Alberta Health Services Patient & Family Advisory Group

Being sick or in pain can be scary! As care providers, we put tremendous effort into mapping effective clinical & administrative pathways for patients, but we can further improve our effectiveness by **understanding how the steps we ask patients to take through our systems can make the experience either more, or less, anxiety producing.**

Step 1

Map the patient steps through your service.



Engage staff in identifying the steps a patient takes through your service from arrival to departure.

What steps do your patients take?

Step 2

Identify when anxiety occurs.



Ask patients and families to identify where along the pathway they may feel anxiety/stress and why.

Where is anxiety occurring?

Step 3

Get ahead of it!

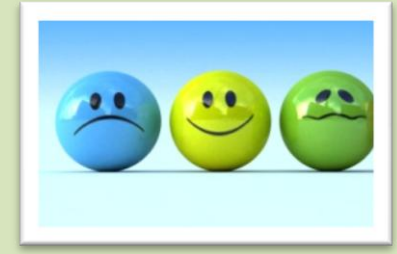


Engage with patients and families to identify and implement ideas that would prevent or reduce anxiety BEFORE it occurs.

What would help?

Step 4

Check results & make further improvements.



Continue to check with patients about their experience of anxiety to gauge the effectiveness of your efforts.

(If you need support to develop a tool, within AHS, submit a request to Data Integration Measurement & Reporting insite.albertahealthservices.ca/ses.asp)

Is it working?

This Practical Wisdom Adapted From:

Leebov, W., Scott, G., & Olson, L. (1998). *Achieving impressive customer service: 7 strategies for the health care manager*. New York, NY: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Dunn, E., Brown, C., & Love, B. (1995). Decreasing anxiety. *Journal of health care marketing*, 15(1), 21.

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Reducing patient anxiety can help improve health outcomes

An emotional care pathway maps the patient journey through your service area, identifies anxiety points, and reduces anxiety as much as possible. **When patients are anxious it can impact their ability to pay attention, remember, and think rationally.** Anxiety can also **increase the experience of pain or irritability.** As caregivers, we can help to improve patient outcomes by decreasing patient anxiety. The following four step process can be used to develop an Emotional Care Pathway through your service area.

1. Map patient pathway

Walk through your service from beginning to end as if you were the patient. This can include referral, pre-registration, travel and parking, way-finding, waiting, meeting care providers, departure, and follow-up.

2. Identify anxiety points

Engage patients and families, using focus groups, surveys or walkabouts, to identify when patients and families may feel anxious when interacting with your service area - and why.

3. Get ahead of it!

Engage patients and families to identify and implement strategies to prevent or reduce anxiety BEFORE it begins. Be creative! There are many ideas for this, such as sending patients a map in their intake package, or keeping them informed about wait times.

4. Check for satisfaction

Seek patient & family feedback and make further improvements.