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A CLIENT STORY

# Revolutionising Healthcare: harnessing feedback for continuous improvement



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Exceptional care that makes a difference.

Mercy Hospital Dunedin is an elective hospital established in 1936, that has been on a consistent mission to deliver “exceptional care that makes a difference” to its patients across the Otago and Southland provinces of New Zealand. A not-for-profit, it has always put the focus on quality projects that result in organisational improvement and better patient outcomes, even going so far as to recognise and celebrate significant quality improvement projects at an annual awards evening.



## Angela Dewhirst

Angela Dewhirst has been Mercy Dunedin's Quality Manager since early 2022. With a public health sector background, where achieving meaningful change is often challenging, Angela has an appreciation for Mercy's commitment to continuous improvement. She has quickly integrated feedback into Mercy Dunedin's regular activities and champions patient experience within the organisation, understanding the value of co-design.

## Valuing the negative

As a top-ranking provider, getting consistently high Net Promoter Score (NPS) feedback, Mercy Dunedin doesn't have to deal with that much negative feedback. But Mercy embraces what they do get. To Angela, it's more than just data - it's a way of bringing Mercy patients' experiences to life.

While conceding positive feedback is always heart-warming and affirming of Mercy's service trajectory, she truly embraces more negative, constructive feedback. Mercy believes that by acknowledging and learning from these experiences, we can continuously improve the quality of care provided.

***“As lovely as it is to hear all the wonderful positive things – and it's great that that's the dominant amount – I find where we get the real opportunity for service improvement is from the other.”***

## Change management

The patient experience programme holds immense value for Mercy when it comes to uncovering patient trends quickly and effectively. It acts as a temperature check, reflecting the mood and trends among patients.

By monitoring the feedback, which is entirely anonymous unless the patient chooses to identify themselves, Angela can identify areas where patients might not feel confident or satisfied with the care they receive. For example, a recent change in staffing within a particular department resulted in a couple of patients expressing uncertainty with the advice they received. This direct evidence helped support coordinators and managers, enabling them to address specific issues and provide better care.

**“We garner real value-add from the people whose experiences didn't go the way they had hoped.”**

## Celebration

It's not just about identifying the problems. The program also helps Mercy Dunedin celebrate the efforts of all staff members involved in patient care. Mercy administrators highlight the positive feedback about not only the clinical staff but also the non-clinical support staff. Whether it's the housekeeping staff maintaining high standards or the receptionists providing exceptional service, Mercy believes in recognising and appreciating every level of the workforce. Through the patient feedback program, they bring attention to these valuable contributions which drives a more integrated approach to care delivery:

**“The patient experience functionality demonstrates how it is all working, so we can then create a more coordinated care approach.”**



***“With the patient experience program, we can see all the different teams that directly affect the patient's experience, from the pre-admission team, inpatient allied health and nursing, our doctors, cleaners, food staff, administration, all the way through to those supporting the discharge process.”***

## Systematic approach

Angela's approach to using feedback is systematic and inclusive. She scans the feedback daily and ensures that specific mentions of staff members reach them directly, with their managers copied in for recognition.

While negative feedback about individual staff members is rare, Angela flags it for the concerned manager to address. She has also established a process for sharing positive patient stories with teams regularly. Delegating this task to an administrative staff member, she creates templates and sends them to executive staff and managers, expecting them to share the stories with their respective teams.

This sharing goes beyond the constraints of computers:

***“In healthcare, a lot of staff that don't need to use a computer as part of their work. So we very deliberately utilise communication tools such as notice boards and team huddles, to ensure our staff hear how highly our patients' value them.”***

## Focus area

**“It's about giving the CEO, and subsequently the board, a snapshot of how we are trending.”**

By ensuring feedback is accessible to all staff, Mercy maintains a feedback culture, one that's aligned around using feedback to drive continuous improvement. This extends to how the organisation's performance and progress are captured in the monthly quality and risk reports.

In these reports, Angela focuses on the quality and actionability of the information, rather than the volume. This approach makes information more digestible, more memorable and therefore far more actionable.

***“I thought I'd give them different information each month as snapshots, rather than showing it all, as there's so much information. I make a note of each month's focus, so the following month can focus on another area, looking at the theme of that topic over the last 12 months.”***

# Clarity for everyone

Along with presenting data in the most user-friendly way possible, Mercy uses Cemplicity's built-in help tools to ensure that everyone in the organisation understands what the data means and how it was captured.

***"I used Cemplicity's help button and did a screenshot of the NPS explanation so that our consumers on the committee understood how we calculate net promoter score. So I use the dashboard tools as education for the wider organisation, whilst monitoring them myself."***

For Angela, this all comes down to ensuring that you don't leave anyone behind by using language that they don't understand and leaving them alienated from the core goals of the programme:

***"You want to bring everyone on the journey with you and you can't assume health literacy, even with people that work in health, because they may not be clinical."***



## Six tips for success

- 1. Design systems to regularly share feedback to all levels of staff. This can include monthly reports to the executive level, fortnightly positive stories reports, and yearly in-depth quality and risk reports.**
- 2. If available, use administrative resources to help create regular feedback channels such as positive patient story reports.**
- 3. When communicating feedback, use clear and simple language that all staff and patients can understand.**
- 4. When sharing insights, highlight a specific area of focus. This ensures information is easy to digest and actionable.**
- 5. Make sure that patient feedback is accessible and unavoidable for everyone in the organisation. E.g. use notice boards to engage staff that aren't regularly at a computer.**
- 6. Ensure that you share and discuss staff feedback - both positive and constructive - directly with the relevant staff member and their manager.**

## Data-driven initiatives

One of Mercy's top initiatives was to use patient feedback data to inform a Medication Safety Week project. Angela started by reviewing two years' worth of patient medication safety incidents and patient feedback. This would ordinarily have been a huge job, but using Cemplicity's VOICE capability, she was able to analyse sentiment and themes quickly and easily, and then use this AI-powered analysis to create a comprehensive summary:

***"I wrote a thematic analysis that was informed by our qualitative data from patient feedback. We used the information to do a little roadshow around our various departments, giving feedback examples to each. Each presentation had examples of either patient feedback or incidents from that area, to generate a conversation with staff about issues and how they could mitigate risk in that space."***

This roadshow was just one of the improvement opportunities identified during Medication Safety Week.

***"A project that came out of it was the medication risk sub-committee. This group drills down on what we are going to do with the information. So that's more in the bigger picture around medication safety."***

***We are also doing monthly education sessions on specific topics around medications with staff. This sits nicely alongside the supportive monthly conversations with staff we have, in each clinical area, focusing on the preceding months clinical incidents."***

Redesigned patient forms, a new interaction video and a medication risk project - all initiatives that were catalysed by a robust analysis of patient feedback across all departments in the business, and all designed to enhance communication, reduce risk and improve patient outcomes.

**"Qualitative feedback we gathered informed the redesign of our take-home medication forms."**

## In conclusion

By championing the patient experience and integrating feedback into Mercy Dunedin's strategic and operational activities, Angela Dewhirst has fuelled Mercy Dunedin's continual improvement initiatives. This approach is replicable and scalable, and most importantly aligns the entire organisation – from leadership to frontline – around the value of patient feedback.

If you want to learn how your organisation can harness feedback to deliver the same continuous improvement, get in touch with the Cemplicity team.





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