



GRATITUDE'S IMPACT ON HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS

Research validates many positive implications of gratitude in the health care environment: improved health outcomes, better HCAHPS scores, increased employee engagement and patient loyalty. These variables impact the financial strength of a hospital and can also help address the concerns that keep the CEO up at night. Those in health care philanthropy can integrate gratitude to positively impact issues the C-Suite faces. This also elevates a solid case for leadership to invest in philanthropy efforts that boost a culture of gratitude and help to establish allies throughout the organization.

A 2019 report notes over 1,000 health care organizations from 34 countries shared trends, identified changes, elevated challenges and shared insights on patient experience.¹ When asked their top three priorities for the next three years, **patient experience** was the solid leader,

followed by **engagement** and **patient satisfaction**. Ninety-one percent of consumers confirm patient experience is extremely important and significant to their health care decisions.² Highly engaged employees help drive a positive patient experience. Actively integrating staff into a culture

of gratitude helps create positive patient experience, supporting higher patient satisfaction. High patient satisfaction provides better financial reimbursement rates since an organization's Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Provider and Systems (HCAHPS) scores help determine Medicare payouts.

Gratitude can also positively impact clinician burnout. A report from the KLAS Research Arch

Collaborative found the health care industry faces major staffing shortages, making it harder to attract and retain clinicians. Troublingly, the KLAS



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¹ "The State of Patient Experience 2019: A Call to Action for the Future of Human Experience," The Beryl Institute

² Key Hospital Financial Statistics and Ratio Medians: Glossary of Formulas, HFMA, 2012.



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report finds that since the start of the pandemic, the percentage of nurses who say they are likely to leave their organizations within the next two years has increased, more so than any other clinician role.³ Lack of teamwork is the contributing factor mentioned most frequently. To help overcome this, implement a culture of gratitude that supports the well-being of clinicians and their patients. Organizations that encourage and facilitate expressions of gratitude develop cultures that drive higher levels of morale and trust among staff and patients.

Research results validate what many in philanthropy have known for years: gratitude is good! Several studies worth highlighting:

- *An Inquiry* report explains results showing satisfaction, trust and commitment contribute to patient loyalty via patient gratitude. A better relationship quality (i.e., satisfaction, trust and commitment) could stimulate patient loyalty by promoting patient gratitude. Patients who perceive a high-level relationship quality from the health care provider in the treatment procedure will translate their perceptions into a positive value and thankful experience, which in turn increases patient return rates. Patient gratitude was proven to be a critical factor in enhancing patient loyalty.⁴
- *Frontiers in Psychology* relates the concept of “reciprocity” in gratitude. There are significant associations between a patient’s perception of quality of care and a health professional’s perceived quality of work life. Positive relationships with patients become a valuable resource for health care workers. In this study of emergency and oncology department workers,

results confirmed expectations about the role of patients’ support and gratitude in reducing nurses’ burnout. The interaction of job autonomy and support/gratitude became evident and can be used by managers as they consider how to develop a healthy culture that limits burnout.⁵

- *Sustainability* published a study examining the three types of gratitude (dispositional, collective and relational) and their impact on employee satisfaction. While dispositional gratitude is tied more to individuals, collective and relational gratitude impact the organizational culture and identity. Collective gratitude is a collective emotional state referring to benefits employees intentionally receive from management. Relational gratitude is received from patients. Both types were found to be predictors of job performance and satisfaction, helping organizations consider gratitude as both a personal and an organizational value.⁶

The value of gratitude has been proven. Share this research with executive leaders to show gratitude is critical to the success of the organization’s KPIs and philanthropy is the unique department to facilitate it.

About the Author: [Pamela Ronka Maroulis, CFRE](#), is President and Principal Consultant with Accordant. She can be reached at Pam@AccordantHealth.com or by connecting through [LinkedIn](#).

³ Clinician burnout is on the rise – and EHRs aren’t always to blame, Healthcare IT News, December 2021.

⁴ Huang, Chih-Hsuan et al. “What Role Does Patient Gratitude Play in the Relationship Between Relationship Quality and Patient Loyalty?” *Inquiry: The Journal of Health Care Organization, Provision and Financing*, Vol. 56, (2019).

⁵ Converso, Daniela et al. “Do positive relations with patients play a protective role for healthcare employees? Effects of patients’ gratitude and support on nurses’ burnout.” *Frontiers in Psychology*, (April 21, 2015).

⁶ Cortini, Michela et al. “Gratitude at Work Works! A Mix-Method Study on Different Dimensions of Gratitude, Job Satisfaction, and Job Performance.” *MDPI, Sustainability*, (July 3, 2019).