

Nominee Information:

1538

Name: Mrs. Parm Hari

Title: Project Manager for initiative/now Director

Organization: Vancouver Coastal Health - Employee Engagement

Project / Group Name (If Applicable): VGH Emergency - Healthy Workplace Initiative: Engage, Educate and Empower!

Address:

Email:

Nominator Information:

Name: Mrs. Nina Paauwe

Title: Communications Leader

Organization: Vancouver Coastal Health

Address:

Email:

Workplace Health Innovation:

1) Provide a brief overview of the project and/or team.

Vancouver General Hospital Emergency Department (ED) has the largest headcount of employees (200 employees) compared to 8 other hospitals under Vancouver Coastal Health and is an accredited Level 1 trauma centre in the province; it sees more than 95,000 patients annually. In 2016, the staff turnover rate was 32%, and the sick rate was very high at 5.7%, which was impacting workflow efficiency and workload. The workplace environment was stressful due to difficult and sometimes aggressive patient interactions. Staff did not have anyone to approach to talk about such incidents and did not feel comfortable raising concerns. This impacted engagement and staff safety and resulted in low staff morale. In February 2016, the Healthy Workplace Initiative (now 'Culture Initiative') was launched to transform the workplace culture using an effective 3 step approach.

2) What is the overall goal of the project and/or team? What problem or challenge is being solved and/or what need is being addressed?

A multi-disciplinary team including Employee Engagement representatives, frontline employees and physicians, operational leaders, and union representatives was formed with the goal of working directly with staff to improve workplace and worker health and safety. The challenge was to get frontline employees and physicians empowered to lead and create a culture of continuous improvement after years of working in an unhealthy environment with limited support.

The key issues that needed to be addressed to improve the working environment were

-Manager span of control/turnover (1patient services manager for a team of 200 employees);

-Staff engagement score had decreased for the last four consecutive years; -Staff turnover rate had increased up to 32% in 201

-Staff survey results which revealed a lack of physical and psychological safety, not enough leadership support,

feedback, training and recognition, increased workload related to volume of patients along with high turnover rate and inefficient patient flow and access.

In addition to employee surveys and debrief meetings, the project lead met with staff members individually who opened up and shared their stories about working in the ED. Some stories involved brutal physical violence targeted at staff and physicians leading to poor morale and increased sick leave rates. Moreover, staff said they did not know how to report violence and the process was too complicated and did not receive sufficient training. Education and debriefing supports were offered during times that did not work well for 24/7 operations and support was typically provided too late after a traumatic incident occurred. It was time for change. An effective multi-pronged and innovative approach was required to change the culture in the ED and keep staff safe and healthy at work.

3) How has the project and/or team demonstrated excellence, leadership, innovation and leading practices? Has it inspired other? Will it add value across the health care system? Please provide specific examples.

In February 2016, the Healthy workplace initiative was launched. An innovative and collaborative 3 step approach was used to improve working conditions in the ED, which is now being used as best practice model across VCH:

1. Engage: A survey was conducted to identify main issues in the ED. Some major issues that emerged were: lack of physical and psychological safety, no leadership support and not enough knowledge on violence prevention and effective management of critical incidents. Visioning exercises and weekend retreats were held for staff and physicians to engage and to foster team building. A new leadership structure with DC3 nurses was introduced to make leaders more accessible and provide coaching and support to staff. Working groups were created with nurses and physicians leading them to have a direct voice on informing next steps. Other teams have approached the HR department asking about the new leadership structure and opportunities to implement in their area.

2. Educate: Coaching was provided to ED leadership and physicians on developing conflict resolution skills and improving team interactions. Weekly 'just in time' violence prevention exercises (first of its kind) were launched by Workplace Health. These exercises have since been implemented in other high risk areas and are featured in 'Canadian Nurse' as a best practice violence prevention education model. Timely critical incident stress management group debriefings (now available 24/7) were organized by EFAP to ensure that the team witnessing and experiencing such incidents is provided with immediate support and information about stress management and coping strategies. Due to the success of the program, it has now been implemented in select high-risk units across VCH, increasing accessibility to stress management and coping strategies for other employee groups. In addition, an innovative STOP VIOLENCE campaign was launched featuring life-size posters of staff and physicians who have experienced violence to influence behavioral change and encourage reporting. These included quotes aimed at stopping violence such as "We report all acts of violence, staff safety comes first," signed by the employee. The posters have contributed to less patient safety (violence) events which have since decreased by 64%. The ED posters are now being featured in other clinical areas at VGH and Richmond Hospital as part of the digital signage pilot project.

3. Empower: A peer mentor group was created (includes physicians) which in its second year, has doubled in membership. Every shift has at least one peer mentor who is the go to person for any issues that staff have on shift. The group was trained in and now trains new mentors in emotional intelligence, respectful workplace, informal leadership, difficult conversations and managing critical incident debriefs. One mentor noted the impact of the program, "If staff feel more encouraged to ask questions, they don't necessarily feel as isolated when they feel faced with challenges." Mentors are now even meeting outside of work to create positive change amongst their team and have inspired other clinical teams to look at implementing a similar model.

4) Has the project and/or team achieved its goals? How has care for individuals been improved? Please provide specific examples of results.

We are pleased to report that the ED culture project has yielded positive results in all areas of health and safety, leading to an improved working climate where staff feel engaged to provide the type of quality care that our ED patients deserve. Staff engagement is now very high and turnover rate has decreased by 79% since 2015. The sick rate, related to violent incidences and working climate, has declined by 24.5 % since 2015. The compliance rate for completing Violence Prevention Alerts is 71% (up from 0%). Results from the last staff survey also showed the impact these changes have had on staff:



-95% of the ED staff reported an increase in engagement

-89% of the ED staff reported an increased awareness of violence reporting; -92% of the ED staff reported indicated that violence prevention weekly education has been very useful;

-96% of the ED staff agreed that the availability of 24/7/365 Critical Stress Debriefing has provided support.

The collaborative effort of the project team and operations in partnership with frontline staff and physicians contributed to the success of this initiative which has empowered staff to continuously improve their processes and workplace and share their story with other VCH teams. Employees feel cared for as a result of the enhanced workplace health and safety programs aimed at improving their well-being and are working more collaboratively as a team. Staff truly felt their voice was heard and are actively participating in sustaining the positive change that has occurred (e.g. ongoing participation in growing mentorship program featured in VCH news). The healthy workplace initiative in the ED has paved the way for other culture project work at VGH (e.g. BMT and Vancouver Community Culture projects) to improve workplace health and safety for staff across VCH. The ED healthy workplace initiative presentation was recently selected among many abstract submissions across the country to be presented at the 2018 Community and Culture in Learning Health Systems conference.