



Fewer Surgical Events, A Better Infection Rate, and Lower Staff Turnover All Within One Year of CRM

How St. Francis Hospital in Columbus, Georgia Went from Good to Great with Physician Buy-In for Their CRM Program

Like many health care organizations, St. Francis Hospital in Columbus, Georgia, (SFHGA) knew that to ensure its sustainability with the torrent of changes in health care, it had to make safety a major priority. Although the hospital had a solid quality and safety record overall, less-than-optimal communication and teamwork in the OR had led to some negative outcomes.

Hospital leaders knew they had to move from good to great. So the CEO made quality and safety their top priorities and took the unique step of incorporating this mandate into the hospital's strategic plan. The move worked. The results from their initial CRM implementation, started just a year ago, are remarkable.

About SFHGA

The faith-based health care leader in southwestern Georgia

was founded in 1950 by a group of community leaders. Today the hospital boasts a full suite of services, including: the area's only open heart-surgery program; orthopedic care; surgical, emergency, and pain management services; women's health care; and more.

SFHGA was the first hospital in the area to be accredited by the Joint Commission for Acute Coronary Care, and they have received many national and state

awards, including: the *Consumer Hospital of Choice Awards for Best Doctors, Best Nurses, Best Quality and Best Reputation* for three years in a row; Georgia Hospital Association's *Circle of Excellence Award*; the *Quality and Patient Safety Award from the Partnership for Health and Accountability*; and more.

Knowing When to Move

When hospital leaders acknowledged the need to make significant changes, they committed to making more than mere process changes. They knew that to make a lasting impact, they needed to change their culture.

Chief Medical Officer Bobbi Farber, MD, spearheaded the effort. “As an orthopedic surgeon and chief medical officer, I have come to believe that it is only through effective teamwork that an organization can fully embrace a culture of safety,” said Dr. Farber. To help ensure the effectiveness of their plan, they joined forces with LifeWings, experts in health care and aviation who pioneered the adaptation of proven safety methodologies from other high-reliability industries to the healthcare setting.

LifeWings’ team of physicians and facilitators began the multi-phase program, built around the principles of crew resource management (CRM), with the perioperative services department at SFHGA in 2010.

LifeWings’ risk assessment, conducted prior to the design of SFHGA’s custom CRM program,

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**Chief Medical Officer
Bobbi Farber, MD**

revealed potential safety-lapse areas to target, including:

- Highly variable behaviors between teams
- No standard pre-op to OR to PACU handoffs
- Inconsistent time-out procedures
- No “shared mental model” briefing pre or post-procedure.

The joint team established the focus of the CRM program to standardize and hardwire behaviors related to:

- Pre-op to OR/Anesthesia handoff
- Final time-out
- OR to PACU handoff
- OR supply management
- Debrief and follow-up.

Realizing no change would occur without a partnership with the institution’s physicians, a major focus was placed on identifying and engaging physician champions. LifeWings safety coaches worked with the physicians in perioperative services to ensure that they

understood the methodology, potential results, and why the effort would benefit all hospital stakeholders. This first step was the most important part of the LifeWings program as research shows that “end user” adoption of culture changing behaviors and tools is primarily a function of effective leadership action.

Next, LifeWings prepared customized courseware targeting the needs of SFHGA and presented it to physicians and staff. The training was interdisciplinary, experiential, and based on health care case studies. It provided evidence-based teamwork skill sets based on team training from the aviation industry—CRM—and adapted them to the needs of the OR team.

The third phase of the program provided customized safety tools (checklists, protocols, and scripts) to hardwire the teamwork behaviors into daily work life. Using a process based on the Lean principle of creating greater value with a more efficient use of resources, a small group of physicians and staff met to identify where improvements were needed, create the tools, and develop an implementation plan. The fourth, and critical phase of the program enabled SFHGA to know if their effort worked. The team analyzed current metrics of the hospital’s safety record and identified specific goals for improvement. This measurement plan is mandatory in LifeWings programs as it ensures accountability and a return on investment for their clients.

Results

The SFHGA CRM program has provided truly remarkable results in a very short time period:

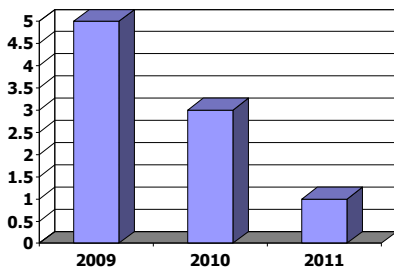
1. Results of the safety-climate survey administered after the implementation show dramatic improvement in the perception of hospital staff and

physicians on those indicators related to patient safety in their area.

2. Focus Group Interviews

conducted by an independent organization revealed that **real improvements were observed by the staff** including: more time to make sure the OR is prepared; greater collaboration between surgeons and staff; more effective use of time-outs and checklists; increased buy-in from physicians for formal safety initiatives.

3. Significant surgical events decreased from 5 in 2009 to 1 in 2011.



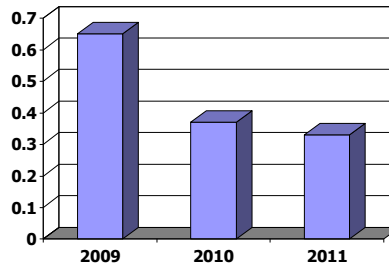
4. Compliance with process of care measures for surgical patients (SCIP) has improved dramatically.

5. Perioperative staff turnover is at an all-time low, at just under 5% for 2011.

“It is not just the noted decrease in sentinel events and other untoward events but the increase in productivity and teambuilding that makes LifeWings so attractive.”

**Chief of Staff
William Taylor, MD**

6. The surgical site infection rate has decreased to national best practice levels from .65 in 2009 to .37 in 2011.



According to William Taylor, MD, Chief of Staff and physician champion, the first year results are impressive. “It is not just the noted decrease in sentinel events and other untoward events, but the increase in productivity and teambuilding that makes LifeWings so attractive,” emphasized Dr. Taylor.

Planning for Continuous Improvement

With great results under their belt from their first implementation, leaders have committed to making

improvements throughout the hospital. CRM training is mandatory for all proceduralists, and for physicians admitting to the critical care units. By 2013, training and re-credentialing on CRM will be required of all staff and physicians. To facilitate this, SFHGA sent leaders to the LifeWings Master Training course where they became certified to teach the program to other departments.

Partners with Purpose

LifeWings, located in Collierville, TN, was founded in 2005 with the sole mission of helping health care providers improve safety with the proven teamwork, safety tools, and methodologies for communication used successfully in high-reliability industries. Their leaders, experts in health care and aviation, were the pioneers in effectively adapting tools proven in the aviation world to the health care setting. Their program succeeds where others have failed because they require their clients to measure results and have a plan for sustainability. They teach clients how to create safer cultures and teach future employees the methods, so the improvements are systemic, not one-time quick fixes. As a result of industry-wide recognition of the LifeWings program, their team has helped providers nationwide improve service delivery, patient survey scores, and employee satisfaction. Providers that employ the methods in LifeWings programs also reduce exposure to malpractice and loss of reimbursement due to errors.



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