



spotlight on health

Community Asked To Help Design Health Care Of The Future

(NAPSA)—One of the best ways a hospital system can evolve to meet the needs of the community it serves is to ask the community exactly what it needs.

That's what Hospital Sisters Health System's (HSHS) Western Wisconsin Division did. Consisting of Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire and St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls, the HSHS Western Wisconsin Division took an uncommon approach to its five-year strategic planning efforts. The hospitals asked a wide cross section of the community to imagine an ideal health care system through visioning sessions, town hall meetings and online interaction.

"Hospital systems are an incredibly important part of the communities they serve and this interdependency will only increase as changes from health care reform take effect," said Steve Ronstrom, CEO of Sacred Heart Hospital and president, Western Wisconsin Division, Hospital Sisters Health System. "To meet the future head on, we decided to take the unprecedented step of asking the public directly what it wants and needs from its health care system."

The hospitals held visioning sessions throughout their communities. After listening to approximately 1,600 community members, including business leaders, tradespeople, senior citizens and students, the hospital leaders have a better, more current understanding of what patients would like to see within their local hospitals.



The concept of a more holistic approach to health care—treating mind, body and spirit—resonates across the country.

Participants offered up a wide range of suggestions, but one common theme became obvious: Residents want their future health care system to take a holistic approach and treat mind, body and spirit.

"We need a place where a sick person does not feel alone. Where fears are addressed and where they feel loved," said Dale, a participant in Eau Claire. "A hospital should be a place that heals the whole person. It should embrace life and death, and deal with both ends of life with grace."

Residents in Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls were clear in their stand that they need the comfort of touch while they are in the hospital. Moreover, physicians need to speak with their patients rather than at them and use vocabulary that is understandable. Residents also said that physicians, nurses and other

health care personnel need to spend more time looking their patients in the eye and connect with them.

In Chippewa Falls, a community member said, "I would like to see hospitals be more proactive, not reactive. Go back to basics and ask holistic healers about how we can heal ourselves first—body, mind and spirit. Holistic healers should be more involved in our hospitals."

While every community is unique, the concept of treating mind, body and spirit resonates across the country. It's a concept that all health care systems can incorporate to be more in tune with the people they serve.

Additional ideas for a future health care system and hospital were discussed with kindergarten and fourth-grade elementary students. Some of the ideas from them include more color throughout the hospitals, having books and games in patient rooms, and having popular food like Subway available in the hospital.

The students even envisioned a hospital with an aquarium floor.

While the sky was the limit during the visioning sessions and community meetings, many of the ideas and wishes from community members would entail simple changes. It does not always require hundreds of thousands of dollars to provide patients with what they want.

Many times, it just takes some listening and compassion—something any community health care system can do.