EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Patient Advocate: A Critical Role in Patient Experience

Co-authored by three insightful healthcare leaders and patient advocates themselves, this paper reinforces the value the role of patient advocates have in healthcare. Patient advocates have remained true to a certain set of principles and a shared value that has been essential to maintaining balance of focus in healthcare organizations.

The role of the patient advocate is a very unique and special one and can truly make a difference for people throughout their healthcare journey. The information from those functioning closest to the patients is often the most impactful in effecting real change. It takes a person who has courage to stand up for what is right, and speak on someone’s behalf when necessary. When a patient trusts an advocate with their story, it means ensuring that voice is being heard. It means making the experience better for that patient, but then also learning from the story to make improvements in the organization.

There are many roles and titles for patient advocates. They are often referred to as patient representatives, patient liaisons, ombudsman and of course patient advocates, in addition to other designations. But even more importantly, the roles they play within healthcare organizations are varied and their contributions numerous. The patient advocate usually fills one or more of five complementary roles in a healthcare organization:

1. Patient advocate
2. Information resource
3. Institutional change agent
4. Partner in collaboration between the community and the organization
5. Grievance coordinator

Patient advocacy developed slowly throughout the years, fueled by the needs of the patients and families in a changing and challenging healthcare climate. This paper explores the history of patient advocacy, how it has evolved over time and its relevance to the patient experience.

ABOUT THE BERYL INSTITUTE

The Beryl Institute is the global community of practice dedicated to improving the patient experience through collaboration and shared knowledge. The Institute defines the patient experience as the sum of all interactions, shaped by an organization’s culture, that influence patient perceptions across the continuum of care.

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