

4. The Power of a Strong Leader and Why it Matters More than Ever Before
Transcript

Speaker 1: (00:02)

Welcome to *Together, We Heal*, a new podcast, brought to you by SCP Health. As one of the largest healthcare partners in the country, we work to bring hospitals and healers together in pursuit of clinical effectiveness. Our programs span the entire continuum of care, including emergency medicine, hospital medicine, wellness, telemedicine, intensive care, and ambulatory care. On *Together, We Heal*, we will share expertise from our clinical and business leaders on how to create healthier communities, both within and outside the four walls of the hospital.

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Today on *Together, We Heal*, we are going to discuss the power of a strong leader and why it matters more than ever before. In our previous episodes, we've talked about addressing disaster fatigue, building resiliency, and implementing strategic staffing techniques to help your hospital and health systems recover from COVID-19 in 2021. At the helm of this is the guidance of strong leadership. As your clinical teams charge through this next phase of the pandemic, and continue the journey in their heroic, albeit exhausting career, it is imperative that your existing leadership adopt key tactics for sustaining and building their long-term retention and engagement.

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Restoring patient satisfaction and rebuilding trust among members of the community is vital for hospitals and health systems. Of equal importance is the need to repair the breach in hospital staff and physician satisfaction and trust, while acknowledging that this may look different than before the pandemic started. The burden falls on business and clinical leadership to drive change. Leaders must come together to assess the damage, determine the steps needed to make the repairs, and implement the required changes to build resilience in the organization. This will ensure that the next time a traumatic event occurs, hospitals will be better prepared to deal with the fallout. If there is a silver lining behind COVID-19's dark clouds, it's that hospitals and health systems have a chance to do things differently and better than before.

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So, let's dive into our discussion of the power of a strong leader, and why it matters more than ever before. As recruiting and retaining clinicians may be more difficult during and after the pandemic, it's increasingly important that hospital leaders foster a healthy practice environment. When it comes to physician retention, practice environment is often cited as the most influential factor in a physician's satisfaction at work. A physician is like any other professional. If he likes where he's going to work each day, he'll be less inclined to look elsewhere.

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There are essentially two areas you need to consider evaluating. First, evaluate your medical director. We all know that the primary leadership position within your clinical teams who will have the most influence over your providers, is your medical director. When they assume this role, they take on the responsibility of leading their teams to perform the highest level of patient care, whether things are quiet, or we are in a global crisis. The director of any of your departments is the keystone of its success. A strong director will manage efficient, profitable, and patient-centric operations. At the same time, a strong director will lead the staff toward its goals, in a way that is personally satisfying to the participants, and also instills a sense of group achievement.

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How does your current medical director stack up? You can evaluate their leadership skills by considering some of these questions: does your medical director interact with dissatisfied patients? Do they provide timely follow-up to any patient or staff complaints or comments? Do they instill a collaborative practice between staff physicians, NPS, PAs, and nurses? Do they provide nonclinical staff educational opportunities that support the department's goals, such as patient satisfaction training? And finally, does your medical director interact closely with administration to ensure mutual goals, and participate in ongoing assessment of those objectives? Improving provider satisfaction can be a seemingly daunting task, however, simply evaluating your existing medical leadership capabilities, as we just outlined, will give you a healthy step in the right direction.

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The second area of importance is to evaluate your business leaders. There are three key factors a hospital leader can impact to create a better practice environment. One, engaging and empowering the team. Two, keeping communication lines open, and three, ensuring adequate coverage. On the first point, one way to better involve your team members and help them feel engaged, is by reinforcing your hospital's culture and core values. Staying true to these fundamentals creates a moral compass that will guide you in the right direction. Get your teams involved in ways to recognize core values daily, to help them feel engaged. For example, start a peer-to-peer recognition program where they can nominate another clinician who embraces a core value of your organization. Positive reinforcement during daunting times can certainly help lift spirits.

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As we mentioned, transparent communication is another priority as a strong hospital leader. Not only should executives communicate frequently and enterprise wide, but also openly, proactively,

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and sincerely. Now more than ever, hospital staff are taking serious note of how their employers handle important topics and situations, and are expecting them to act quickly and with intention. Be transparent about the strengths and weaknesses of your organization, and how you plan to move forward. That includes addressing health disparities in your local community, and what you are doing to ensure everyone can access and afford the best care possible. You will want to involve your workforce in these discussions to get their perspectives and thoughts. Their input can be incredibly valuable. Consider using open forums, focus groups, interdepartmental task forces, and surveys.

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This wraps up our discussion of the power of a strong leader, and why it matters more than ever before. Rebuilding satisfaction and trust among your provider teams is key to surviving and thriving after the pandemic, and strong business and clinical leadership at your facility level can make or break that success. With a proper understanding of your facility's challenges, you can take small steps towards a more positive practice environment, and ultimately, happier clinicians.

Speaker 1: (06:54)

Join us in two weeks on *Together, We Heal*, when we wrap up season one of our series on COVID's call to action, and how the chapters of COVID have brought transformative impacts to our industry. We'll discuss ways to use what we've learned, in order to build your brand and image as the trusted advisor for your community moving forward.

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In the meantime, get to know us and find out what we can accomplish together by visiting our website, scp-health.com. Here you can learn how we've helped hospitals like yours take action to streamline hospital operations, implement cost and revenue solutions, achieve clinical quality goals, and more. Again, that's scp-health.com. See you next time.