



MANITOBA INSTITUTE  
FOR PATIENT SAFETY

## Make It Personal: Interview Series

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### An Interview with Brenda Solomon

Brenda is fully in love with her job. She feels privileged to work as a Nursing Unit Manager at Eden Mental Health Centre in Winkler, Manitoba. Making sure that everyone on this 25 patient unit is safe and feels respected is at the heart of the work of this unit team. Brenda told me about three strategies they use to ensure patient safety on the Inpatient Unit; Putting on Fresh Eyes, Supporting Staff with Feedback, and Valuing Patient Feedback.



#### Putting on Fresh Eyes

To spot potential safety hazards, Brenda and the staff view the unit with “fresh eyes”. Brenda explains, “Looking at everything as if it is new, and looking from another person’s perspective can really help to identify potential risks. Having this attitude is so different than just coming on the unit and going about your business. It can be so easy to get caught up in all the tasks that we need to do in our day.” Brenda prioritizes time to walk through the unit with various team members including the C.E.O. Quality Standards Lead, Program Director, Maintenance and other front line staff to spot risks in order to ensure potential safety hazards are identified.

#### Supporting Staff with Feedback

Brenda feels that the most important component of Quality Improvement initiatives is providing respectful, and non-threatening feedback to staff in order to build a culture of safety. One of the many Quality Improvement projects undertaken focused on the use of Dangerous Abbreviations, Symbols, and Dose Designations for medications. The facility developed a DO NOT USE abbreviation policy to ensure that no medication errors would result from use of a misinterpreted abbreviation. Staff were educated about the new policy and provided with tools to help them adhere to the policy. For example, applicable staff members received a small laminated quick reference card to carry in their pocket or wear on their name tag. Monthly audits are performed on random patient charts to check for policy compliance, and then most importantly, audit results are regularly shared with the team to support improvement. Brenda



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says, “I am really proud of the professional staff that work here – they are constantly looking at ways to improve on the services we deliver to be the best that we can be!”

### Valuing Patient Feedback

Listening to patient feedback has been another important strategy for improving patient safety on the unit. The unit gives each patient an Inpatient Satisfaction Questionnaire when they are discharged home so that the unit can understand the patient experience of being on the unit. Brenda is proud of the large number of surveys that have been returned. She says, “It makes us proud that people feel respected enough to put their time and energy into completing the survey and sharing their honest feelings.”

One example of a change made due to survey feedback was the introduction of a flameless lighter. In the past, the only way a patient (who was a smoker) was allowed to go for a cigarette was to request a lighter from the staff, or have a staff member go outdoors with them to light their cigarette. Patients expressed they felt somewhat disrespected to be at the mercy of someone else to light their cigarette for them. Brenda says that this valuable patient feedback that resulted in the installation of the flameless lighter addressed multiple risk issues: “there aren’t any lighters being stored on the unit, patients feel more respected, and everyone on the unit is better protected because we don’t have to worry about a lighter being forgotten in a pocket.”

### Putting the Care in Health Care

Brenda’s passion for the care that her team provides is palpable. Brenda says, “Everyone has their story- taking the time to listen to every single patient is important. If you do a good job to help people feel respected, valued and cared for, they will tell you the issues that they are struggling with day to day so we can try and better equip them to deal with those issues. Patients and families need to know that we care.”

*The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety (MIPS) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation established in 2004 to promote and coordinate activities that improve patient safety and enhance quality healthcare in Manitoba.*

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