



MANITOBA INSTITUTE
FOR PATIENT SAFETY

Make It Personal: Interview Series

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An Interview with Monique Wichenko

Monique is a Musculoskeletal Injury Prevention Physiotherapist at the Grace hospital, and was a MIPS Patient Safety Champion Award Winner in 2015. Through her dedication and passion in her role at the Grace, there has been a reduced risk of harm to staff as well as patients.



Understanding the Impacts of What We Do

For Monique, patient safety is about providing the highest quality of care. In an acute care environment, preventing or minimizing the adverse effects that can result from care is important. Monique explains that day-to-day patient care requires multiple seemingly simple decisions, but that each of these decisions has impacts. To provide the best care possible, healthcare providers and patients need to have a thorough understanding of the impacts of what they do, or what they choose not to do.

To illustrate this point, Monique uses the example of having patients walk while they are ill in hospital. Walking is very important for maintaining health, even during an acute illness, but encouraging walking needs to be balanced with the need to prevent falls. Potentially conflicting priorities need to be thoroughly examined and considered within the context of each patient's situation. Not only is it important for staff to recognize the impacts of the choices that they make in day to day care, but to make sure that patients also understand the risks and benefits of these choices.

Staff Safety & Patient Safety Go Hand in Hand

To determine priorities for improving staff safety, Monique tracks trends in staff injuries. She then implements initiatives to prevent similar injuries from occurring in the future. This requires her to determine how to improve safety for staff, while also ensuring the safety of patients.



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In one instance, Monique was investigating why multiple nurses experienced significant shoulder and upper back injuries. She learned that some of these injuries occurred when the nurses were quickly moving patients from a chair up onto a bed in order to provide CPR. Collaboration between Monique and the critical care team resulted in a new procedure to move these patients to the floor, instead of on to the bed. Not only did this reduce the risk of staff injury, but it also improved patient care as chest compressions could be started earlier.

Talking the Talk, Walking the Walk

Monique is recognized for her role modeling of best practices in patient safety. She continues to provide physiotherapy care to patients about one day a week in addition to her role in injury prevention. She sees this as an opportunity to “live and breathe” the challenges of front line staff. She experiences the same situations where staff may need to make decisions in less than ideal situations, and this helps her to understand the needs of staff when doing injury prevention education. Being able to take on a clinical role also is helpful in that Monique can work alongside staff who are dealing with injuries to provide them with real time, on the floor training and support.

Improving Patient Care By Being Tenacious

It is important to Monique that we create environments where both patients and staff feel safe to challenge each other. She models this by being tenacious in pointing out important issues to managers and other decision makers. For example, when there is an issue with safety equipment for patient handling, she points out the issue until it is resolved. And when asked what patients can do to ensure their own patient safety, she has the same advice: be tenacious! “Sometimes, there can be tension when a patient and family have a lot of questions for staff. But there is no other way for patients and families to understand the implications of the care choices they are making. It is important for care providers to be knowledgeable and confident in the care they provide, and when they are, they will be comfortable being challenged with difficult questions from patients. We can’t cut corners when it comes to answering the questions of patients and families - it’s too risky.”

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.

Written by MIPS Volunteer, Cara Brown