



2012 PROFILES IN OR EXCELLENCE AWARD

# Patient Satisfaction

It's all about providing great care and bringing comfort to patients.

## GRAND PRIZE

### Best Tip for Online Pre-Admission

No forms to fill out or phone calls to answer for the patients at the multi-specialty **Elmhurst (Ill.) Outpatient Surgery Center**. The entire pre-admission process — both the pre-admission medical history and the night-before-surgery confirmation call — is automated. Hard to say who loves it more, patients or staff, says **Tina Mentz**, Elmhurst's executive director, so we'll settle for both.

At first, Elmhurst's nurses recorded patient responses in the online pre-admission tool, which meant there was still a phone call to make and typing instead of handwriting. Now, however, the ASC has rolled the online service out to patients. Within the first 30 days, Elmhurst had a 10% utilization rate by the patients, says Ms. Mentz. "The patients love this service and our nurses do, too. It significantly reduces the pre-admission assessment call," she says.

That's not all. Elmhurst uses a text reminder service that prompts patients to complete their medical histories online before their procedures and sends reminders regarding their arrival time, NPO procedures and special preparation procedures. For example, colonoscopy patients receive a text detailing the prep instructions.



**TEXT ALERT** Automated text messaging guides patients to and through their scheduled surgeries.

"Utilization of our online medical history tool has been great," says Ms. Mentz. "After 1 month, we're still evaluating the effect on NPO/prep compliance and arrival times. There has also been savings in terms of time spent making confirmation calls. Patients who receive the text messages love it."

Elmhurst didn't stop there. The ASC also implemented a fast-track registration process to streamline the registration process for repeat patients to the surgery center, defined as patients who had a procedure at the ASC within the previous 30 days. These are mostly cataract surgery and pain injection patients. Those patients don't have to complete another online patient history, re-verify their insurance or listen to another HIPPA talk. "All they do is sign a release of benefits form and then they can go right back," says Ms. Mentz. "This has further reduced our registration time significantly and allowed a faster admission to pre-op."

For a 6-OR, 2-procedure-room facility like Elmhurst that performs more than 8,000 surgeries annually, automating the pre-admission process has been a tremendous timesaver. Some patients, however, are more tech-savvy than others and some aren't as comfortable filling out their information online.

To simplify the process for all your patients, Angela Laux, BSN, MSOLQ, administrator of Bellin Orthopedic Surgery Center in Green Bay, Wisc., suggests that you provide them with an instructional brochure during their pre-op visit. This brochure should include step-by-step instructions for completing the form, which includes mostly checkboxes to save time and extra typing.

Bellin Orthopedic instructs patients to log on to its website at least 1 week before surgery, click on the box in the top right corner to register their information, and follow the remaining directions on the screen. "We also instruct patients that aren't comfortable filling out the online form to contact an RN to share the necessary information," says Ms. Laux, who adds that the information staff collect from simple yes-or-no questions also help the surgical staff better prepare for procedures and prevents cancellations as well. "For example, if a patient notes she sometimes has difficulty walking up a flight of stairs, we can anticipate potential respiratory problems and prepare accordingly."