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The strong relationship of employee engagement with many aspects of business performance is well documented, and it has led to an interest in identifying and improving key drivers of overall employee satisfaction and engagement. This is especially important in the healthcare industry, in which the interactions between patient and caregiver often are intensely personal. A well-trained, highly-engaged workforce is essential to the provision of high-quality, safe, and efficient healthcare services. Moreover, many organizations place a high priority on demonstrating respect for their employees, including the provision of a satisfying work environment.

Sadatsafavi et al. addressed the important issue of whether various environments in hospitals are associated with job-related attitudes and feelings of employees. The results suggest that certain aspects of work space and staff areas have a considerable influence on job-related feelings and attitudes of employees, particularly those employees who are newer to the organization. Many organizations experience the

highest turnover among employees in their first few years of employment (NSI Nursing Solutions, 2014). Therefore, to strengthen retention of this subset of employees, hospitals can, in addition to implementing strategies such as onboarding and mentoring programs, increase efforts to ensure that work spaces and staff areas are well designed.

Of interest to practitioners would be the relative impact of facility design on employee engagement compared with other indices of engagement. In general terms, organizations desiring to improve employee engagement tend to focus on providing meaningful work and ensuring that employees believe their work is valued and making a difference in the organization. From a practical standpoint, organizations must closely study the results of their employee opinion surveys and make choices about the items on which to focus to produce the strongest overall impact. Although improvements in the physical work environment may produce positive results, the effort and expense may produce a smaller relative yield than other improvement strategies. For example, an increasing number of organizations are creating systems to formally engage frontline staff in continuous daily improvement activities, producing positive results in safety, quality, customer satisfaction, and financial stewardship, as well as in employee engagement (Barnas, 2011). These systems are based on the principle of respect for people; empowering them by providing the tools they need to become problem solvers; and enabling them to find fulfillment in their work. Such systems have the potential for more widespread organizational impact on multiple dimensions.

However, hospitals seeking specific strategies to improve engagement of newer employees would be well served to consider improvements in work space and staff areas, particularly for departments such as medical-surgical nursing units that often have higher turnover and tend to hire more employees from outside the organization. The focus on creating healing environments for patients also applies to the valued employees responsible for delivering that care.

REFERENCES

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