

Case Study: Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital

How a hospital improved their leadership performance and wellbeing



Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital (SCGH) was opened in 1958 and is one of Australia's leading tertiary teaching hospitals, fully accredited by the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards and located at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre.

SCGH provides a comprehensive range of clinical services and is home to WA's only comprehensive cancer centre. The hospital has an international reputation for groundbreaking medical research and was home to now-retired 2005 Nobel Laureate for Medicine Professor Barry Marshall, whose pioneering work demonstrated that bacteria and not stress causes stomach ulcers.

Challenge

Sir Charles are known for their service mentality which positively impacts patient care and empathy amongst staff. However, this high level of 'care' can also translate to leadership challenges when it comes to setting expectations, maintaining healthy boundaries and holding staff members to account for their tasks and behaviours. They needed to equip their leaders with the ability to balance empathy with accountability to enable improved performance.

Solution

We needed to help staff to understand how their individual perspectives around care in relationships and their personal leadership style in interactions with staff were impacting on team members behaviours. Through cycles of development that built the capacity of individuals for enhancing their leadership style and human-centred group discussions that supported the group to reflect and learn from each other, we enabled the group to see how they were over-valuing care, to the detriment of not only team performance but their own individual wellbeing and time management.

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Impact

Leaders took personal insights forward with specific workplace practices that connected with their individual need for change. Reported behaviour change included:



“With the intention of ensuring I’m collaborative, I listen to lots of different perspectives and struggle to decide on a solution. I procrastinate and delay my decision-making

Pause practice: What do I want? What is most needed here?

Implementing structure: time boundaries around decision-making; follow ups on Delegations

“Faster decision-making that represents my own leadership along with consideration of others’ perspectives. Relationships are improved – there is more directness, but it is still respectful.”

“I feel a need to control everything to feel safe. This impacts my confidence and stress levels. “

Mindfulness: simple exercises from the practice library

“Mindfulness has been very impactful on my wellbeing and I feel more confident and less inclined to have to control everything. I realise much of the risks I’m experiencing are just in my head.”

“Because I consider myself as empathetic and good at reading others, I hadn’t realized I might be mind reading.”

Practice: Questioning assumptions and checking in with others

“By checking in with others my relationships have improved, I’m better able to help people as I’m not relying on assumptions.”

“In my desire to be seen as helpful, I find it difficult to say no – it makes me feel guilty. I take on work I don’t really have time for as a way of avoiding the conversation.”

Practicing self care activities: proactively delegating more; saying ‘no’ appropriately rather than taking on too much.

“I’m worrying less about others’ perspectives of me and being liked. I feel more confident in myself and I’m finding it easier to have difficult conversations and hold others to account rather than just doing things myself.”

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Testimonials

I am now able to trust in my ability to make clear decisions, communicate my visions and support others to do the same. I believe I now have the ability to control my environment more, to set boundaries and to hold those boundaries and accountabilities. By trusting in the team leaders I can now delegate and monitor which thereby is freeing me up for important higher level planning and activity.

I think I have learnt to be firmer/more assertive and not be as concerned about others perceptions so less feeling of guilt and trying to be everything to everyone. I have allowed myself to say no and protect my time/boundaries better.

I am able to understand that people/colleagues have their reasons for behaving in a certain way. Being aware of this has changed how I interact with people.

I am better able to speak up for myself; have slightly more difficult conversations; procrastinate less when I'm unsure of my decisions; and be brave.

RESULTS

83

Net Promoter Score

76%

of participants reported better working relationships

63%

reported increases in accountability