



QI Update

PartnerUP! For Ideas

By Amy L. Harrington, MD, CPE

Assistant Professor of Psychiatry

Director, Addiction Psychiatry Fellowship

Director of Quality, Department of Psychiatry

Medical Director, Acute Addiction Continuum, Community Healthlink

There are literally hundreds of people who work for the Department of Psychiatry, all in a variety of roles and from a variety of backgrounds. One of the wonderful things about having diversity in education and experience is that we don't all think the same way. We all approach problems differently, and as a result, we can each contribute in a unique way to the solution.

Many members of the department work in clinical settings, directly serving patients and their families. Other members of the department help educate future health care providers, either in the lecture hall or at the bedside. It is easy for the people who work in these roles to see the direct connection between the work they do every day and the overall mission of the department.

Many members of the department work behind the scenes in finance, administration or some other role that supports the mission in other ways. As medical center or medical group employees, they are required to implement one idea as a part of their annual review. Unfortunately, many people are not successfully meeting this requirement.

What are Ideas, anyway? An Idea is more than just a suggestion in a suggestion box. It is a way of thinking about problems so that you come up with the most targeted solution. An Idea card will prompt you to think about:

- What exactly is the problem?
- Why is the problem happening?
- What is your idea for a solution that is going to address the underlying cause of the problem?

Recently there was a great example of two different parts of the department working together on one idea. The CANDO clinic likes to have paper available for their pediatric patients to use to color, but they are wasting money by using fresh computer paper. The administrative staff on the second floor print out dozens of coversheets every day that end up just getting recycled. The idea was to save the cover sheets and give them to CANDO. Not only did this idea help minimize costs and paper waste, it helped some of the administrative staff feel connected to the patient care going on in the clinic.

Imagine the ways we could improve patient care, education and the overall function of the department if people from different work areas worked together to think of and implement ideas. The Department of Psychiatry has done an incredible job of generating high numbers of ideas every year. It would be great if we could take this process to the next level and PartnerUp! for Ideas.

What are the benefits when we PartnerUp! for Ideas?

- A different perspective on a problem that leads to a solution we would not have thought of otherwise
- More innovative/disruptive ideas
- An increased sense of connection to the mission of the department
- Helping our colleagues meet their performance requirements

I would encourage everyone in the department to find someone who works in a different job role or setting, and work on an idea together. If you are a school employee, find someone on the hospital side and work on an idea together.

If you already have an idea but are not certain who to collaborate with, e-mail me at amy.harrington@umassmemorial.org and I can help you find someone who might be a good fit (and who is in need of an idea.) You can either fill out an Idea Card at a department meeting or at S2-237, or you can e-mail your idea to PsychIdeaBoard@umassmemorial.org. I can't wait to hear the exciting ideas that these partnerships come up with!