

Enhancing Organizational Engagement through First Friday Education and Professional Development

Aims:

In healthcare, fostering a culture of connection, learning, and professional well-being is essential for delivering high-quality care. This initiative explores the impact of First Friday, a monthly education and development program at Samaritan, designed to enhance team cohesion, job satisfaction, and staff well-being through consistent, interdisciplinary learning experiences.

Methods:

First Friday includes a rotating series of programs tailored to diverse roles and interests:

- Clinical Coffee Hour – Continuing education that focuses on topics relevant to healthcare providers, reinforces clinical competencies, and supports professional development.
- Lunch & Learn – Covers broad interdisciplinary topics that resonate with both clinical and non-clinical staff that encourages dialogue and reflection across departments.
- Leadership Forum – Develops emerging and current leaders in change management, workplace culture, business development, and team support.
- Afternoon Matinee – Uses storytelling and visual media to explore themes in caregiving and lived experience.
- Dive into Diversity – Promotes cultural humility and inclusive care practices.

Attendance, feedback, and follow-up surveys are used to assess engagement, learning application, and program impact.

Results:

Quarterly evaluation data (n=7) show:

- Team Cohesion: Average score of 7.0
- Job Satisfaction: Average score of 6.57
- Overall Wellbeing: Average score of 6.71

Qualitative feedback revealed strong themes of:

- Organizational Belonging – Staff reported feeling more connected to the broader Samaritan community.

- Collaboration & Communication – Improved understanding of roles and interdisciplinary respect.
- Knowledge Reinforcement & Growth – Sessions reaffirmed clinical and emotional competencies.
- Inclusivity Needs – Non-clinical staff expressed interest in broader content relevance.
- Attendance Challenges – Competing demands impacted participation despite high perceived value.

Program-specific feedback highlighted:

1. Clinical Coffee Hour: An advanced practice nurse reported feeling totally prepared to treat a patient with intractable nausea after attending a Clinical Coffee Hour on pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatments.
2. Lunch & Learn: Deep emotional resonance, practical application in patient care, and desire for more interactive formats.
3. Leadership Forum: Strong engagement with personality and change management topics; requests for continued development.
4. Afternoon Matinee: Powerful storytelling and historical context; recommended for wider organizational sharing.

Supporting Evidence:

This initiative aligns with national models of interprofessional education and development:

- The VA Boston Healthcare System’s First Friday Faculty Development Series demonstrates the value of recurring, multidisciplinary education in fostering engagement and collaboration.
- Research on the ROI of continuing education shows that ongoing professional development improves patient outcomes, staff retention, and organizational culture.
- A scoping review of experiential learning in interprofessional practice education supports the use of reflective, interactive formats—like Lunch & Learn and Afternoon Matinee—to build team competencies and collaborative care skills.

Conclusion:

First Friday has proven to be a meaningful strategy for enhancing organizational engagement through interdisciplinary education. The initiative supports a culture of learning, connection, and professional growth, contributing to improved team dynamics and staff satisfaction.

Clinical Implications:

Healthcare organizations can replicate this model to foster team cohesion, support staff well-being, and promote continuous learning. Tailoring content to diverse roles and creating space for reflection and dialogue are key to success.

Future Directions:

Ongoing evaluation will explore long-term impacts on retention, collaboration, and patient outcomes. Expanding the initiative to include more non-clinical content and flexible formats may increase accessibility and engagement.

Keywords:

Professional development, team culture, organizational engagement, healthcare education, staff well-being, interdisciplinary learning

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