

## Organization

Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, located in Hershey, Pennsylvania, 10 miles (17 km) east of Harrisburg, is Penn State's medical school and academic medical center. At the end of June 2013, Penn State Hershey Medical Center admitted more than 27,000 patients and provided care through over 911,000 outpatient and over 67,000 emergency-service visits. The College of Medicine educates more than 1,700 nursing, medical, physician assistant students and other learners annually.

Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital at the Penn State Hershey Medical Center is the only children's hospital located in South Central Pennsylvania and maintains the region's only Level I (highest level), and Level IV neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). The Children's Hospital houses 151 beds and treats more than 154,000 patients annually through the hospital and its outpatient clinics.

## Challenge

Penn State Hershey Medical Center was seeking to improve its *U.S. News & World Report* Hospital Rankings in both the adult and children's specialties to elevate its regional and national reputation. By doing so, Penn State Hershey felt it could increase employee retention, better support and entice medical students to the College of Medicine and drive greater patient preferences. However, Penn State Hershey has a tremendous amount of competition from the academic-based medical centers in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Pittsburgh. In fact, Penn State Hershey is within a few hours-drive of five of the seventeen hospitals on the U.S. News Best Hospitals Honor Roll. They needed to find a way to compete in this space with modest financial investment.

## Approach

Penn State Hershey brought in Gabrielle DeTora to help identify their best short-term and long-term opportunities for improvement. However, first we recognized that we had to build internal consensus and change the organization's culture to champion this initiative. Gabrielle met with key stakeholders to make the case to why hospital rankings are important, and to show that the impact of enhanced rankings would improve not only the institution's reputation, but could reveal opportunities for improved clinical quality and financial reimbursement. Once internal support was gained, Gabrielle had the momentum to begin collecting and validating its data and criteria to determine where their greatest gaps and opportunities were.

Gabrielle and her team identified the key service lines that represented the medical center's best opportunity for ranking. Once we completed this extensive evaluation, we developed a timeline for an improvement initiative that included quality, documentation and process improvements as well as a national, physician-focused marketing plan for reputation ranking enhancement. We closely worked with their clinical and coding teams to review their Patient Safety Indices (PSI) and mortality coding processes. Here, we uncovered some documentation issues that were negatively impacting their scoring. We also determined that Penn State Hershey was providing incomplete data when completing the annual AHA survey. This was the result of a fragmented survey completion process and a failure to properly review survey question definitions. These gaps resulted in lower ranking scores, and in some cases, caused Penn State Hershey to be listed as ineligible in some specialties.

In response, we worked with their clinical teams to identify areas on the survey that needed adjustment to make sure they were properly filling it out each year.

Collaboratively, Penn State Hershey’s Chief Marketing Officer and Gabrielle co-developed information dashboards to track results over time, so Penn State Hershey could measure their success year-over-year.

## Results

Through this extensive improvement plan, Penn State Hershey has been able to build on their pediatric rankings success and improve their scores in two key adult categories. For the 2013-2014 year, Penn State Hershey was ranked in five pediatric specialties: orthopedics, cancer, cardiology/heart surgery, neurology/neurosurgery and urology. This was an improvement over the prior year where they were ranked in only three specialties and a significant improvement from just four years prior, when the Children’s Hospital had no ranked specialties. Of the 178 pediatric centers that U.S. News surveyed only 80 hospitals across the country ranked in one or more specialties. This rankings improvement could not have come at a better time for Penn State Hershey as they opened their freestanding Penn State Hershey Children’s Hospital in early 2013. They are now leveraging this rankings success to better position themselves as the pediatric clinical leader in the region.

Furthermore, they continue to track their score improvements in the two adult specialties that they prioritized as a result of the evaluation. Over a three-year period, they gained 6.4 points and 6 points respectively against the 50<sup>th</sup> ranked hospitals in those specialties, which indicates that the strategy is having a direct impact that will keep them on track over the long term.

Lastly, the rankings strategy has had an important halo effect on other areas of the organization. In particular, the process improvements made from this initiative has increased communication among providers, patients and families about palliative care, allowing for the best and appropriate care for its sickest patients. It has also improved their PSI documentation, allowing them to focus more attention on medical events that are truly PSI flags. What’s more, these changes in documentation have uncovered missed revenue opportunities for the Medical Center.

## Dashboard Illustrating Scoring Improvements

	2009/10 score (out of 100*)	2010/11 score*	2011/12 score*	2012/13 score	Gain/Loss '09-10 to '10-11	Gain/Loss '10-11 to '11-12	Two-year Gain/Loss	Gain/Loss '11-12 to '12-13	Three- year Gain/Loss
<b>Specialty A</b>									
Penn State Hershey	13.6	24.5	27.9	52.3	10.9+	3.4+	14.3+	24.4+	38.7+
50th ranked facility	20.6	27.2	30.5	52.9	6.6+	3.3+	9.9+	22.4+	32.3+
Difference	7.0-	2.7-	2.6-	0.6-	4.3+	0.1+	4.4+	2.0+	6.4+
<b>Specialty B</b>									
Penn State Hershey	11.4	20.6	30.3	51.3	9.2+	9.7+	18.9+	21.0+	39.9+
50th ranked facility	23.5	30.5	36.2	57.4	7.0+	5.7+	12.7+	21.2+	33.9+
Difference	12.1-	9.9-	5.9-	6.1-	2.2+	4.0+	6.2+	0.2-	6.0+