

# Do I have to focus my improvement efforts on my Key Driver®?

When designing action plans that will improve patient perceptions, PRC recommends beginning with your Key Drivers of Excellence®. To improve perceptions of the Overall Target (such as Overall Quality of Care, Overall Rating of the Hospital, Likelihood to Recommend), you should consider what specific questions most influence that general measure. That's what Key Drivers® are for; they provide a more specific place to focus your efforts. We use statistical analysis to sort through patients' responses to identify the areas that are most important in making experiences excellent. Every survey question provides information, but not every piece of information is equally important to your patients.

Key Drivers® are not necessarily areas in which your organization is performing well or poorly, but simply areas that have the greatest influence on patients' overall perceptions. Key Drivers®, then, are best understood as aspects that truly separate an environment that simply meets patient expectations and an environment that exceeds those expectations.

Key Drivers® are meant to inform your priorities, but you should also consider information gathered from your own eyes and experiences. Other information to consider might include staff buy-in, goals and incentives, overlap with other initiatives (such as pursuing Magnet status), etc. **Keep in mind, though, that pursuing improvement on a non-Key Driver® question may not have as big a payoff on overall perceptions as the Key Drivers®.**

Here are a few suggestions to consider as you weigh your options:

**Don't confuse your lowest scores with the most important scores.** The eye can be drawn to the lowest scores, but just because a score is low does not mean that it is significantly important to how a patient perceives care. For example, food quality is often a low score, but it rarely drives how a patient perceives their overall experiences. Even if you improve perceptions of food, you will not likely improve perceptions of Overall Quality of Care.

**Consider your primary goal.** Key Drivers® will help move your Overall Target question, but hospital-wide initiatives or leadership messaging may encourage focus on a different question. For example, an Emergency Department may be concerned primarily with their "left without being seen" metric, so they may want to focus on a "Total Time Spent" or "Time Before Seen By Physician" question.

**Don't build improvements around individual complaints.** Service recovery is an important piece to any hospital strategy, but do not let individual comments or complaints drive your improvement efforts. Your improvement strategies should have a broader focus and more consistent message than can be garnered by a particular isolated comment. Plans are best aimed at improving a "normal" experience, and not the exception to the normal experience.



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**Aim to cultivate easy wins.** In order to get staff to buy into processes to improve perceptions, it is valuable to focus on specific, straightforward processes that will likely be translated into immediately identifiable gains. Strategies like AIDET (the standardized greeting that stands for Acknowledge, Introduce, Duration, Explanation, and Thank) or interactions that focus on direct communication are likely to yield immediate, if qualitative, results such as a smile, a kind word, or a slightly less anxious more focused patient. The goal here is to get staff to see the cause-effect relationship of these strategies, creating buy-in and motivation to continue to adhere to the plan.

