

Roane Medical Center Building a Culture of Safety



Roane Medical Center is a 54-bed facility with four operating rooms and six ICU beds, located 45 minutes outside of Knoxville, TN. We spoke with Jason Pilant, President and Chief Administrative Officer and several members of his team about their culture of safety.

Roane Medical Center, part of Covenant Health in Tennessee, has been accredited by The Joint Commission since 1960. According to Pilant, accreditation is just one more way Roane Medical Center builds and fortifies its culture of safety.

Staying survey ready

“We always try to stay survey ready,” says Pilant. “Even during years when we aren’t being surveyed. It’s a continuous process.” Staying survey ready means circulating information about new standards across the organization, reviewing the Joint Commission standards manual section by section throughout the year, and implementing innovative programs that help keep patient safety top of mind, including:

- **The Speak Up program**, a Joint Commission recommendation, in which everyone is encouraged to report problems or near misses, without any stigma or blame attached.
- **Environment of Care Rounds** in which multidisciplinary teams perform unscheduled rounds in a collaborative and nonthreatening way in order to “look under the hood” and see what’s going on in each department.
- **Unit Practice Councils**, where staff learn from the bedside what works and what doesn’t when it comes to improving hand-offs and preventing falls.
- **Daily Safety Huddles** in which managers meet and go over any safety concerns from the last 24 hours, fostering a blame-free atmosphere and asking: How can we change our processes so staff is supported and patients are safer?

An educational survey experience

The survey experience itself only added to Roane Medical Center’s enthusiasm for its culture of safety. “We had three Joint Commission surveyors. They all brought different perspectives, were very collegial, and helped educate our staff,” says Patty Ashley, Senior Regulatory/Risk Manager. In one instance, the pharmacy staff was a bit anxious beforehand, but the surveyor calmed their fears immediately, talking about his own experience and his passion for sterile compounding. “The conversation just took the anxiety right out of the air,” says Ryan Reddick, Pharmacy Director. When the laboratory was being surveyed, the surveyor specifically asked to have as many lab staff as possible join her for lunch. During that time she shared information and videos, talked about zero harm and how harm could reach a patient. “It meant a lot to the lab staff that she took her own time to do that,” says Ashley.



Roane Medical Center recognizes *Speak Up!* recipient, Gerald Ward

These are the result of a systemwide emphasis on putting patients first – as well as Roane Medical Center’s drive to reach zero harm. “We really embrace The Joint Commission’s mission to make healthcare a high reliability industry,” says Ashley. “The Joint Commission is the starting point for looking at all our programs and procedures. They make us think deeper and broader about the latest issues like opioid stewardship, ligature risks, and patient identifiers.”

Roane Medical Center also tackles issues head-on. One example was the instance of stock-outs. They asked

themselves, how can we decrease the number of times a nurse comes to a pharmaceuticals cabinet and it’s out of what she needs? Through a multidisciplinary approach, open communications between pharmacy and nursing, and by studying the times of day and locations of medication use, they were able to reduce

stock-outs from 250 per month to 40 per month.

Measuring success by the numbers

As far as assessing the success and value of accreditation, “You can’t manage what you can’t measure,” says Pilant. Here are a few statistics that show Roane Medical Center’s safety mindset successes:

- No catheter-associated urinary tract infections in 6 years
- Only 1 central line bloodstream infection in 6 years
- Only 1 pressure injury in 2019
- Only 1 c.diff infection in 2019

Roane Medical Center also engages with their medical staff and shares quality numbers with them, so physicians have the opportunity to ask questions about the data. “Doctors love to talk about the data,” says Pilant. “And when we talk about patient safety goals, we don’t just talk numbers, we talk about what this means to patients, which makes it a lot easier for a person to understand and support.”

**Committed
to Quality** 

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Achieving primary stroke center certification

Roane Medical Center has also earned Primary Stroke Center Certification from The Joint Commission. The entire Covenant Health system is a stroke hospital network, so Roane Medical Center needed to determine whether to go for acute or Primary Stroke Center Certification. Because of their location 45 minutes outside of Knoxville and the older demographics of their patients, they decided to pursue Primary Stroke Center Certification. It took two years to build their multidisciplinary program. “We spent time going out into the community to educate people – even children – on the signs of stroke. Self-assessment is key to stroke treatment – getting people into the ER for treatment within a specific time window,” says Pilant. Before certification, they administered approximately six tPA treatments per year; now, they treat 3-4 patients a month. Serving a community with financial challenges, Roane Medical Center even negotiated better reimbursement costs with the drug manufacturer to help those in their community with limited insurance cover these treatments.



Keeping up with change

“Things are changing so quickly in healthcare, you have to do everything you can just to keep up,” notes Pilant. “Especially as the industry moves away from volume of care to quality of care, The Joint Commission continues to refine standards, and we have to determine how we can meet the standards in a meaningful way. There is a continuous pressure to be better and do better for our patients.”