From a Clinician Perspective

Patient and Family Advisory Council by Linda Flaherty

The McLean Hospital Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) was established in 2010 to serve as a forum to promote excellent patient and family-centered care. By communicating the perspectives of patients and their families regarding the care experience at McLean, PFAC works in an advisory role to enhance the care experience across the hospital’s treatment settings. I have been privileged to work with the Council since inception.

Patient and family-centered supports collaborative partnerships among providers, patients, and their families built upon a foundation of dignity, empathy and respect. Key elements include recognition of and respect for differences and preferences of patients and families with respect to culture, ethnicity, and abilities; and communication, education, and collaboration in support of shared decisions-making and patient empowerment.

Patient and family advisors commit to attending six meetings per year for three years. There is also the option to serve an additional three-year term. Advisors serve as guest faculty during new employee orientations where they share their experience of receiving care at the hospital. Advisors contributed valuable content in the development of the “Guide to Inpatient Hospitalization” and the “Guide to Transitioning from Inpatient Care.” Members of PFAC advanced the “Tunnel Arts Project” to improve the aesthetics of the hospital’s tunnel hallways.

Another area of focus for PFAC has been to promote stigma reduction programs. Two recent examples include participation with Palaver Strings, a musician-led ensemble. Using spoken words from PFAC members, and music selected by Palaver Strings, a concert provides a forum to open conversation on mental health issues. The Opioid Arts/Storytelling Project was a four-hour art and audio storytelling workshop in which participants shared their personal experience of the impact of the opioid epidemic. The audio-recorded narratives and artwork serve as a vehicle to promote dialogue on substance use conditions.

PFAC is seeking siblings of patients with mental health conditions to join the council. Applications can be found at the Patients and Families tab on the McLean Hospital website.

PFAC and the Cole Resource Center (CRC) have worked collaboratively over the years. Joanne Grady Savard, its Executive Director, has been a valued member of PFAC, and I have served on the Cole Center Board. PFAC and CRC are now working on bringing Mental Health First Aid Training to McLean.
I am pleased and excited to see all the new offerings from the Cole Resource Center and look forward to the continued collaboration between PFAC and the CRC!

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