

Changing anesthesia providers after 20 years is challenging. Completing the transition in 90 days makes the challenge even more daunting. Yet one southern California acute care hospital did just that with the right partner.

“With such a short transition time, we were concerned about the potential interruption of surgical cases or service. Somnia assembled a team of professionals, managed the credentialing and contracting process, and integrated a quality assurance program – all without missing a beat. The feedback from the surgeons and nurses has been overwhelmingly positive.”

– Hospital Chief Medical Officer

RESULTS

- Successfully recruited and hired a Chief of Anesthesia
- Recruited 12 board-certified/eligible physicians
- Recruited 8 Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs)
- Transitioned from a Physician-only to a Physician/CRNA staffing model
- Reduced anesthesia subsidy with new staffing model
- Recruited and trained an onsite practice administrator
- Conducted an orientation and tour of facility for new providers and staff
- Established a new employee onboarding process
- Integrated quality improvement program for measuring, tracking and reporting performance data

SITUATION

The last thing a hospital wants in the operating room (OR) is disruption. Cohesive teamwork and exceptional communication between surgeons, nurses and anesthesia providers is vital for successful outcomes and patient safety. When that synergy was irrevocably broken, this southern California hospital knew it was time for a change.

Change is never easy, especially when that change is to your anesthesia provider group. The hospital had enjoyed a long, 20-year relationship with the independent anesthesia group; however, recent changes contributed to escalating service issues.

In three years, the group replaced retired leaders three to four times, changed billing companies, business managers and attorneys, and added new graduates to its existing group. There was growing dissension between the new anesthesia providers and leaders, which often spilled over to the OR. Surgeons and nurses were unhappy and registered complaints with hospital management.

In addition to the internal issues, subpar management resulted in increasing financial support from the hospital through anesthesia subsidies. The hospital also faced strong resistance from anesthesia leadership to new bylaws, which required board-certification/eligibility for specialty providers, including anesthesiology.

Despite repeated attempts to work through the issues with the anesthesia group, hospital management decided the years of instability called for a more proactive approach. The hospital issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for anesthesia services and sent the RFP to 50 national and local anesthesia groups, including the incumbent group, as well as anesthesia management companies.

The goal was a long-term partnership with an anesthesia provider with extraordinary leadership skills, experience and the resources for creating efficient, cost-effective, and high-quality teamwork.

The hospital found that partner in Somnia Anesthesia.

ACTION

A committee representing management, surgeons and nursing unanimously selected Somnia Anesthesia (Somnia) as its new anesthesia partner. The reasons were clear – Somnia had the experience, knowledge and solutions.

No one expected the transition to be easy. Success depended on the careful balancing of the clinical and business aspects of delivering anesthesia, while remaining sensitive to the natural resistance to change. It meant bringing together the right people in the right way.

Experience. Somnia demonstrated proven results for managing the difficult and complex task of transitioning anesthesia groups. They'd done it before and had the infrastructure with the clinical and project management skills to get the job done.

Knowledge. As a physician-owned company, Somnia offered unique clinical and operational knowledge for delivering anesthesia services in a hospital setting. That knowledge provided a clear understanding of the issues affecting each stakeholder.

Solutions. Somnia presented the hospital with defined financial and operational solutions with a transparent, methodical approach for assessment, implementation and evaluation.

Somnia dispatched a team of physicians and project management experts for an onsite assessment of anesthesia services that focused on finance, operations and quality. Somnia conducted one-on-one and group meetings with 44 members of the incumbent anesthesia team, the cardiac anesthesia team, and hospital management and staff.

After 340 hours of onsite time, Somnia provided its needs assessment and recommendations for transition. The hospital needed a "boots on the ground" solution within 90 days and Somnia delivered.

RESULTS

Today, a new team of anesthesia providers has restored leadership, cohesiveness and quality of care to the OR and the department. The integration of a quality improvement program provided a means for measuring, tracking and reporting performance. Early reports indicate the new staffing model and improved processes and procedures reduced the amount of the anesthesia subsidy.

The key to managing change is communication – something that had been lost with the prior anesthesia group. Somnia understood the process was more than simply changing anesthesia providers. It was about identifying needs, setting expectations and collaborating with stakeholders to meet objectives. It meant being there, side-by-side, making it work. Somnia did that.

That takes commitment that starts with the assessment phase, moves through implementation, and continues throughout the life of the partnership.

It is a commitment Somnia provides to all of its clients.

ABOUT SOMNIA ANESTHESIA

Founded in 1996 by practicing anesthesiologists, Somnia Anesthesia is a full-service clinical anesthesia solutions partner, providing support in all areas of anesthesia including leadership, recruiting, revenue cycle management, payor contracting, quality assurance, billing and credentialing to hospitals, surgery centers and office-based surgical facilities. Owned and operated by physicians, Somnia provides locally recruited anesthesia teams, supported by an unmatched national infrastructure that delivers the economies of scale clients demand. Anesthesia continues to be Somnia Anesthesia's only business.