

# Emerging Best Practices in Response to Evolving Patient Perceptions of Clean

A dramatic shift in patient perceptions of hospital cleanliness.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The pandemic has created a dramatic shift in patient perceptions of hospital cleanliness. Patient experience data from Press Ganey, the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS), and innovative analysis of patient survey comments indicate that whether patients “feel” clean increasingly correlates with how they rate their overall hospital experience. As the pandemic wages on, cleanliness scores continue to decline, widening the gap between pre- and post-pandemic measures of patient experience.

## CAHPS CLEANLINESS TOP-BOX TREND



## INPATIENT EXPECTATIONS FOR HYGIENE HAVE INCREASED



The absence of hospital-acquired infection is imperative; however, addressing patients’ perceptions of personal hygiene while in the hospital is now an important driver of overall experience outcomes. This is in addition to ensuring sanitization processes and procedures are in place, informing patients and clinical teams of these practices, and projecting friendliness and concern in all patient and family interactions.

In conjunction with Press Ganey, Compass One Healthcare is leveraging its role as the environmental service industry’s leader to develop best practices and innovative, evidence-based solutions that address heightened patient anxiety and improve experience outcomes.

## INTRODUCTION

**“Should I trust that everyone here washes their hands like they are supposed to?” asks one patient on a recent Press Ganey patient experience survey. “Why isn’t there hand sanitizer near my bed?” wonders another.**

Such anxieties over environmental safety reflect a dramatic shift in patient perceptions of cleanliness since the advent of COVID-19. Cleanliness scores continue to decline, while inpatient comments mentioning “sanitize” have significantly increased. Whereas patient comments before the pandemic indicated that they based their perceptions of cleanliness on their observations of the overall hospital environment, emerging data indicates that patients now also align their personal hygiene with environmental cleanliness.

Using natural language processing to analyze COVID trends found within patient experience comments and on social media, University of Chicago Medicine discovered that patients were especially concerned with the sanitary conditions of hospital restrooms and with their own personal hygiene.

This evolution in patient perceptions of cleanliness is re-shaping how experience outcomes are defined and met. Press Ganey research conducted in 2016 had already established that a patient’s *perception* of cleanliness is highly correlated with the *reality* of levels of hospital-acquired infection—in effect proving that patients “know clean when they see it” and that they value it. Now, clean has gone from a baseline patient expectation to a core value they demand proof their hospital shares.

Consequently, today’s best-in-class health systems must adopt a standard of clean that equates personal hygiene with environmental safety—not just for patients, but for everyone in the care setting.



## 1

## The Emergence of ‘High Profile Clean’

A Press Ganey review of 350,000 patient experience comments, recorded during the height of the COVID-19 outbreak, showed a consistent upward trend in patient awareness of hospital hygiene and safety practices, including hand-washing, the availability of personal protective equipment, and sanitization. These findings coincided with a national decrease from a high of 74.8 (Q3 2019) to 71.1 (Q1 2021) in average top-box scores for “Cleanliness of Hospital Environment,” as well as a sharp spike nationally in the number of Inpatient comments mentioning “sanitize.”

**“In these days of the coronavirus, I was not happy there was no hand sanitizer available after using the stylus on the machine to take my signature,” was a typical patient survey comment at the onset of the pandemic.**

Although sporadic gains have been made in patient perceptions of environmental cleanliness, national scores continue to lag significantly behind pre-pandemic levels.

With support and insight from Press Ganey, Compass One Healthcare is targeting this gap with a program called High Profile Cleaning. The program leverages their best practices and combines them with strategic messaging and engagement to mitigate patient fears about personal hygiene and improve patient experience outcomes.



## 2

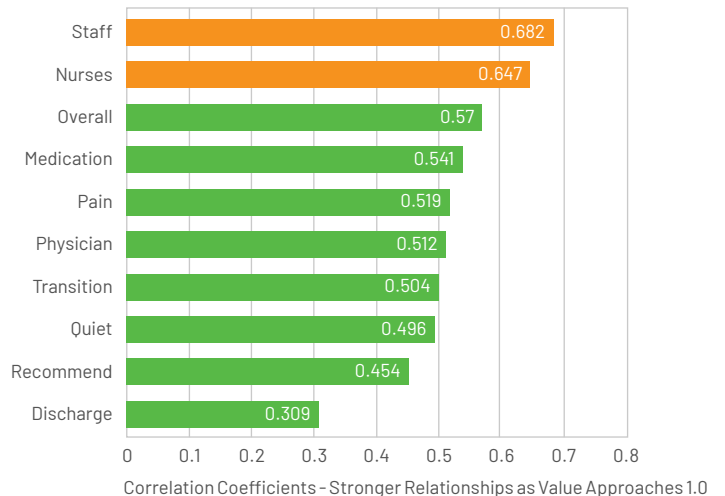
# A New Driver in Patient Perceptions of ‘Clean’

A 2016 Press Ganey white paper, *“Environmental Services: Delivering on the Patient-Centered Promise,”* reported how perceptions of room cleanliness correlated with risk of hospital-acquired infections, and with HCAHPS scores for the items “Recommend the Hospital” as well as various teamwork indicators. Hospitals that scored in the highest quintile for cleanliness also experienced, on average, the lowest number of reported infections.

**Conversely, hospitals with lower patient experience cleanliness scores were those with higher infection rates. Patients surveyed often described their view that cleanliness was a reliable indicator of care overall, expressing the common sentiment that, “If they can’t keep the hospital clean, what other things that I can’t see might be neglected?”**

Additionally, the data showed patient perception of cleanliness strongly correlated with “Staff Responsiveness” and “Nurse Communication.” The findings aligned with established literature citing the importance of teamwork in promoting a culture of safety and in the overall quality of the patient experience. Correlations between highly engaged, responsive environmental services (EVS) teams and high patient experience scores are also well-established.

### CORRELATION OF CLEANLINESS DOMAIN WITH OTHER HCAHPS DOMAIN SCORES



- Cleanliness scores are most highly correlated with scores on Staff Responsiveness and Nurse Communication.
- We know that strong collaboration and teamwork are required to achieve high scores on Nurse Communication and Staff Responsiveness dimensions.

Source: Hospital Compare data for year ending June 30, 2014



Analysis of this data led Press Ganey and Compass One to determine the key drivers of a patient’s perception of clean were ensuring sanitization processes and procedures are in place, informing patients and clinical teams of these practices, and projecting friendliness and concern in all patient and family interactions.

These drivers form the core of Compass One’s “Power of Clean” best practices program and its “5 Pillars of Clean,” which emphasize hand hygiene, disciplined processes, surface measurement, augmentation, and utilization of emerging solutions to address the clinical *reality* of clean. Paired with the engagement of every stakeholder in the care setting, and an emphasis on teamwork as the differentiator in the quality of care delivered, the program also addresses the *perception* of clean.

Data surrounding the evolving perception of clean indicates that whether a patient “feels” clean is the novel fourth driver of patient perception of cleanliness. This insight formed the basis for a three-pronged pilot study using increased messaging, patient engagement, and a novel tool of patient empowerment, as well as a proof of concept study that demonstrated how to simultaneously improve disinfection efficacy and patient satisfaction scores.

### 3

## Focused Cleanliness Campaign Delivers Results

In a pilot study, Compass One implemented an intensified “Power of Clean” marketing campaign across 10 large health systems nationally. The campaign stressed cleanliness as a common value shared by all stakeholders, including clinical and EVS staff, and ranged across a number of items, such as phone, toilet seat, and television remote bands, to tent cards and “while you were out” cards. All campaign elements included QR codes that provided additional information about the cleaning protocols in place.

Additionally, the distribution of personal hygiene kits, complete with sleep mask, ear plugs, hand wipes, body wipes, lip balm, and messaging elements with the QR code, was coordinated between patient experience managers and EVS staff who were given scripts explaining the kits to patients. The scripts also emphasized the 24/7 commitment of the EVS staff to ensuring patient comfort and safety, and advised patients how to reach a staff member should they require assistance. The kits were intended to enhance the control patients felt they had over their personal hygiene while in the hospital.

From Q1 to Q2, sites participating in the pilot program saw a combined 23-point jump in patient HCAHPS scores for cleanliness of hospital environment. The pilot sites also saw a combined jump of 5 points in overall hospital rating. Given that staff performance ratings remained flat, the jump in scores show the effectiveness of the High Profile Cleaning campaign.

HOSPITAL	1/1/21 - 5/9/21	5/10/21 - CURRENT	NUMBER OF CURRENT SURVEYS	% INCREASE
Hospital 1	66.04	87.50	8	32.5
Hospital 2	69.35	82.35	17	18.7
Hospital 3	64.66	70.59	17	9.2
Hospital 4	81.48	91.67	12	12.5
Hospital 5	73.00	85.70	14	17.4
Hospital 6	76.20	65.00	20	-14.7
Hospital 7	67.57	64.00	50	-5.3
Hospital 8	74.10	75.50	53	1.9
Hospital 9	44.55	44.44	9	-0.2
Hospital 10	66.25	70.00	10	5.7
<b>Average</b>	<b>68.32</b>	<b>73.68</b>		<b>7.8</b>



## 4

# 'Memorable' Cleaning Events

In a separate proof of concept study, Compass One leveraged advanced technology that was being piloted in several hospital sites nationally to simultaneously improve disinfection efficacy and patient experience scores around cleanliness.

The state-of-the art technology included a UV-C Surficide Helios tower, commonly referred to as a “robot,” to disinfect rooms after patient discharge. The “robot” was already proven to inactivate difficult-to-eliminate pathogens in a single disinfection cycle. Compass One and Surficide conceived of using the tower to create a memorable cleaning experience for patients and provide more opportunities for EVS staff-patient interaction.

EVS staff at four hospitals, selected nationally, were given scripts to demonstrate how the robot would clean the patient’s restroom and to explain the robot’s purpose and safety. The goal was to positively impact both the reality and the perception of clean. When compared with previous year quarterly averages, after controlling for variables, the use of the UV-C towers along with proper scripting dramatically improved overall average quarterly patient experience scores across all sites, anywhere from 5.5 points to 17.5 points.

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*The appearance of the machine, and the education that we provide, makes the patient feel safe. First they ask if the machine will give them a tan, then they thank us.*

– EVS on-location manager





## CONCLUSION

Because the EVS industry has historically focused on cleaning the physical environment and not people, the evolution of patient perceptions of environmental safety poses a unique challenge to EVS leaders and staff. By incorporating patient personal hygiene as the newest key driver of patient perceptions of cleanliness, Compass One is advancing EVS industry best practices with the development of its High Profile Cleaning™ program.

Hospitals seeking to remain best-in-class should consider:

- Leveraging the 5 Pillars of Clean: 1) hand hygiene, 2) processes, 3) surface measurement, 4) augmentation, and 5) emerging solutions to mitigate transmission and HAI incidence
- Emphasizing through a multi-layered, strategic messaging campaign that “cleanliness” is a value shared by all members of the care community
- Implementing a holistic cleaning strategy that empowers patients to own their personal hygiene while hospitalized and provides memorable cleaning experiences





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