

Innovative Comic Strip Storyline for ThedaCare

CHALLENGE

Increase awareness of and engage specialist physicians in ThedaCare's Collaborative Care model through compelling videos by using existing footage from three previous videos.

TARGET

Specialist physicians throughout ThedaCare's branches. Secondary target audiences included nurses, pharmacists, and other hospital staff including lab, physical therapy and occupational therapy.

SOLUTION

ThedaCare undertook a Hospital of the Future (HOF) initiative which embodied what they want to give patients — the best care experience possible. The initiative was a direct result of their focus on continuous quality improvement to deliver better patient value. Their new care delivery model, "Collaborative Care," is how ThedaCare planned to deliver that experience. ThedaCare asked our team to create a "breakthrough" internal communications campaign directed at their specialist physicians to communicate about the new care model, including:

- Testimonials from specialist physicians "champions" – ones that have tried the new model, understand how it works and look forward to using it in the future
- How staff roles would change with the new model, specifically about working relationships with nurses and pharmacists
- Highlights of the main aspects of the model, including admission, bed side care conference and discharge.

Our team created a custom comic strip called "The Collaborators" to help break through ThedaCare's self-identified internal communications clutter. The comic strip tells the story of "Mr. Patient" and outlines the Collaborative Care process in monthly episodes. Each episode highlights a key attribute in the Collaborative Care process, demonstrates care team member interaction, and addresses common questions and specific issues related to Hospital of the Future and Collaborative Care.

We worked with ThedaCare to develop a story line and design concept that would resonate with the primary audience. We enlisted the help of a review panel consisting of nurses at various levels in different roles to assist us in creating the content and ensuring medical accuracy in the care model delivery process. It was important that we garnered a firm grasp of care treatment procedures, so the content was accurate and believable.

We wanted the audience to focus on the differences in the care model, and not be distracted by inaccurate medical depictions. In addition, it was critical to find an illustrator whose style was compatible with the nurses' view of their roles. Through concept testing, we identified that the

images most meaningful to them were those that depicted real people in respectable and professional roles, rather than futuristic superhero characters.

One of the biggest challenges was integrating the desire for a “break-through” communication piece while also making the content clinically accurate and highly believable. Each episode of “The Collaborators” was distributed as an 11x17 poster, with accompanying talking points, to all nurse managers who share it with staff on their units. A PDF version of the comic strip was sent as an email attachment to all nurses following their unit meeting, and was posted on the employee Intranet site where staff can get additional information about the key feature highlighted in that episode. The strip also was printed in the employee newsletter.

OUTCOME

ThedaCare chose to pursue “The Collaborators” comic strip concept because it was unlike anything the organization had done before and because it visually represents the collaborative care process. In addition, marketing personnel felt that the concept was sustainable over a long period of time — a crucial factor since the switch to the new care delivery model is complicated and information-heavy. Monthly comic strip episodes give ThedaCare the opportunity to present one key piece of information at a time and continuously engage stakeholders. ThedaCare also appreciated that the comic strip could be distributed using existing communication channels, whereas other tactics they considered were much more costly. In addition, the strip gave ThedaCare the opportunity to use it in a future external communications effort.