Introduction
This hospital-wide quality improvement initiative was multi-focal and deeply ingrained in the High-Reliability Organizational (HRO) model, as pictured below.

This initiative was designed to foster a practice change toward improving delirium recognition and treatment in the inpatient and outpatient settings. As families and caregivers are often the most accurate and astute assessors of the patient’s baseline cognitive function, development of educational material for the community was a vital aspect of the project. Therefore, in collaboration with the Patient and Family Advisory Council for Quality and Safety (PFACQS), patient educational materials were developed, outlining ways to empower the community in dealing more rapidly and proactively with delirium.

Setting
This work was conducted at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center (MMMC), a 138-bed community hospital in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Deeply involved in this work was the PFACQS, which was established to work with patients, family members, and MedStar Health staff, all focused on improving outcomes and modeling provider and community partnerships.

Scope of the Problem: Delirium
Delirium is a sudden, serious disturbance of mental abilities that results in confused thinking and reduced awareness of your environment.

Although the exact etiology of delirium remains uncertain, it is thought to be related to inflammation or sepsis, changes in neurocognition, drug or alcohol withdrawal, or administration of sedatives, opiates, or psychoactive medications. It is frequently associated with pre-existing cognitive impairment and advanced age.

Delirium is a strong risk factor for prolonged recovery and increased functional decline.

Up to 70% of patients experiencing delirium go untreated, in great part because it is essential to have familial or regular caregiver input in order to accurately differentiate delirium from dementia.

Families should be encouraged to express their concerns about changes in the mental status of their loved ones. Family involvement with delirium care is a holistic approach to current delirium management, which may improve patient outcomes.

Health care professionals must utilize families’ keen knowledge and awareness to encourage accurate delirium and risk factor identification.

Program Aims
1. Increase awareness of risk factors associated with onset of delirium, and related preventive measures.

2. Provide a proactive approach to empower families to recognize and report signs of delirium.

3. To encourage families and caregivers to provide initial interventions in response to early symptoms of delirium.

4. To frame delirium as a medical emergency, allowing caregivers to feel comfortable in immediately contacting their healthcare providers.

Approach: Program Design
To design a robust delirium program that would be sustained, the PFACQS joined with a dedicated team of healthcare professionals at MMC. The steps in the development process included:

1. Identify key stakeholders.

2. Jointly develop goals, objectives, and outcome measures.

3. Define the scope of the problem.

4. Engage the community through PFACQS involvement.

5. Formulate an educational approach for the community.


Approach: Program Elements
The following goals were essential elements in designing the community educational products in this initiative:

1. Develop a comprehensive delirium education program for caregivers within the community to encourage preventative practices, recognition of signs and symptoms, and immediate responsive actions.

2. Craft a message that addresses misconceptions (i.e., Delirium is not a psychiatric disorder).

3. Create a marketing plan to build awareness of the impact of delirium on patients and caregivers within the community (i.e., Delirium is treatable – let us help!).

Lessons Learned
1. PFACQS was critical to program success – they were eager to partner with us and their insight was invaluable.

2. Families are an untapped resource in recognizing delirium and establishing cognitive baseline.

3. Creating an environment of trust and openness allows sharing of stories that infused an element of reality.

Product Developed
The Delirium project encompassed several important components to assist with education and empowerment of patients and their caregivers in the identification, assessment, and treatment of delirium. Patient education materials developed by PFACQS included the tri-fold brochure pictured below.