

The Passionate Pursuit of Perfect Health Care

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The passion for pursuing perfection in health care should become a contagion. Lessons learned from our work at Hackensack University Medical Center in Hackensack, New Jersey with The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement are as follows –

- 1) CEO sets the pace, makes quality the top priority, and keeps reemphasizing it.
- 2) Establish an infrastructure for promoting and monitoring performance improvement for publicly reported measures sets such those for heart attack, heart failure, heart surgery, pneumonia, and hip and knee replacements.
- 3) Become knowledgeable in performance improvement and its tools
- 4) Develop champions to lead the effort
- 5) Promote redundancy to assure compliance
- 6) Spread quality mantra throughout medical center with Disease-Specific Certification from the JCAHO for stroke, asthma, diabetes, trauma, etc.
- 7) Use root cause analysis and failure mode effects and analysis to remove barriers.
- 8) Stay humble as the job is never done.

What will awaken medical centers from their complacency? Competition is probably the most important. Publicly reporting results by hospital for heart attack and pneumonia helped move the state of NJ from the cellar to the top in the ratings. Pay-for-Performance (P4P) is the second method currently under investigation. The CMS-Premier Hospital Quality Incentive Demonstration project showed that performance can be raised for most medical centers. Other P4P programs focus on physicians rather than hospitals. The real benefits from the P4P programs remains to be determined. The next challenge in improving health care will focus on patient satisfaction and cost efficiency.

Good luck! You can't do a more important thing than pursue perfection.