

***Skills-building series:***

**Creating a culture of quality  
improvement**

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## Purpose of today's webinar

- Provide a general overview of the issues surrounding developing a culture of quality, quality improvement and ultimately patient safety.
- Discuss the basic elements of culture and how to create and reinforce a positive culture that leads to quality
- Encourage a systems- vs. person-centered view of quality
- Discuss the connection between the culture of quality and a culture of safety



# Agenda

- What is quality and quality health care?
- What is culture?
- What is a culture of quality?
- Who is responsible for establishing and maintaining a culture of quality?
- How do you assess culture?
- How do you strengthen culture?
- What is the role of individual accountability?
- What is the difference between a culture of quality and a culture of patient safety?
- Take-a-ways
- Resources
- Q&A



# What is quality and quality health care?

- **Merriam-Webster online:**
  - how good or bad something is
  - a characteristic or feature that someone or something has: something that can be noticed as a part of a person or thing
  - a high level of value or excellence
- **Institute of Medicine, *Crossing the Quality Chasm***
  - “The degree to which health services for individuals and populations increase the likelihood of desired health outcomes and are consistent with current professional knowledge.”
- **Generally accepted**
  - “The right care, at the right time, at the right place, on the right patient.”



# What is culture?

## **Merriam-Webster online:**

- The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization
- The set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic

In other words:

- Social glue that holds people together (Siehl & Martin, 1981)
- Shared values – what's important
- Behavioral norms – the way things are done



# What is a culture of quality?

- Encourages improvement
- Engages people from all levels in improvement activities
- Recognizes that line staff have important perspectives and a stake in improving their work
- Supports feedback and drives out fear
- Takes a systems- vs. person-focused approach
- Supported in all levels of the organization and modeled by leaders



## In other words

“Culture is a balanced blend of human psychology, attitudes, actions, and beliefs that when combined create either pleasure or pain, serious momentum or miserable stagnation. A strong culture flourishes with a clear set of values and norms that actively guide the way a company [organization] operates. Employees are actively and passionately engaged in the business, operating from a sense of confidence and empowerment rather than navigating their days through miserably extensive procedures and mind-numbing bureaucracy.”

-- Shawn Parr, Fast Company, 1/24/2012





# The Four Essentials of Quality

## 1. Leadership emphasis

- Managers are told that quality is a leadership priority
- Managers “walk the talk”
- When evaluating employees, bosses emphasize importance of quality

## 2. Message credibility

- Messages are delivered by respected sources
- Workers find that communications appeal to them personally



# The Four Essentials of Quality (continued)

## 3. Peer involvement

- Most employees have a strong network of peers for guidance
- Peers routinely raise quality as a topic for team discussion
- Peers hold one another accountable like members of a sports team

## 4. Employee ownership

- Workers clearly understand how quality fits with the job
- Workers are empowered to make quality decisions
- Workers are comfortable raising concerns about quality violation and challenging directives that detract from quality

# Is this a culture of quality?



I'M GOING TO NEED A LITTLE MORE FOR THE ROOT CAUSE THAN, *WHO'DA THUNK*.



# The Six Values of a Culture of Quality

## Positive

**Value 1:** We're all in this together: company, suppliers, customers.

**Value 2:** No subordinates or superiors allowed.

**Value 3:** Open, honest communication is vital.

**Value 4:** Everyone has access to all information on all operations.

**Value 5:** Focus on processes.

**Value 6:** There are no successes or failures, just learning experiences.

## Negative

**Value 1:** Everyone for him or herself.

**Value 2:** The boss knows best.

**Value 3:** Keep communication limited and secretive.

**Value 4:** Keep most information at the top, and share it only when necessary.

**Value 5:** Focus on individual work.

**Value 6:** Success is everything; no tolerance for failure.

## Person vs. System Focus for QI

Person-centered view of quality	System-centered view of quality
People make errors	Systems fail
Find the cause (errant person) and blame, shame and train the person	Find the cause (focus on the multiple components that contributed to the failure)
To improve quality and safety, fix the PERSON	To improve quality and safety, fix the SYSTEM

This used to be viewed as a Quality Assurance (QA) vs. Quality Improvement (QI) mindset.



# What makes a strong culture?

**Strong cultures are defined when core values are intensely held and widely shared.**

Strong culture:

- Provides a sense of identity
- Enhances cooperation
- Creates a system of informal rules spelling out expectations about behavior
- Creates distinctions between organizations; developing unique competitive advantages

# Outliers or result of culture?



2017



2008



**Rules- vs. Value-based Culture**



# How culture is communicated

## Rules-based

- “I’m sorry but...”
- “Our policy clearly states...”
- “My supervisor said...”
- “No, I can’t do that...”
- “I am unable to help you...”
- “I wish I could help you but I can’t...”
- “Thanks...”
- “Good Bye”

## Values-based

- “How may I help you?”
- “Let me see what I can do...”
- “Yes, I can help you with that...”
- “Yes, I can help you with that request.”
- “We care about you...”
- “We appreciate your business”
- “Thanks for being our customer.”
- “Thanks for calling.”





# What are elements of culture?

Culture has both hidden and visible elements:

- **Values and norms** – core values to the organization and its people; what is identified as important by leaders.
- **Symbols** – reflect core values, trigger values and norms.
- **Language, slogans and brands** – Quality is Job 1!, Quality 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Rituals and ceremonies** – Quality nominations and awards; reinforce core values.
- **Stories, legends and myths** – Articles, emails, website stories or narrations used to reinforce core values, particularly with new employees
  - Stories are based on fact
  - Legends are based on fact but embellished
  - Myths are not based on fact but consistent culture and core values
- **Heroes** – Role models whose ideals, character and support of the organization's values and norms are desirable to emulate



# Why is a culture of quality important?

- Supports the process of improvement
- Removes barriers to improvement
- Makes quality a priority
- Encourages examination and problem solving
- Prevents hiding problems
- Promotes greater employee and patient satisfaction



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## Insight about change and impact on quality

- Staff enjoy being engaged in changing or improving their work in which they feel valued for their knowledge and experience.
- However, staff do not like being changed or having change forced on them without their involvement or feedback.



## How do you assess culture?

- Does the leader pay attention to, measure and control quality on a regular basis?
- Are scarce resources allocated to QI?
- Are behaviors that support improving quality rewarded?
- Do staff knowledge, skills and behaviors around QI factor in recruitment and hiring decisions?
- Is active involvement in QI a measure of status in the organization?
- Are people spending time on QI?
- Are staff discussing QI opportunities?
- Are attitudes around QI positive or negative?

# How do you strengthen the culture of QI?

- Make everyone responsible for QI – include in performance reviews
- Have an annual QI budget
- Make QI part of the strategic planning process
- Reward behaviors that support QI
- Reinforce QI with positive examples and stories
- Create symbols and rituals to reinforce and celebrate quality
- Leaders must actively support QI successes



Quality is Job 1.





# Rituals, celebrations, awards & accolades





# Motivation

- Make an impact/have a purpose
- Appreciation
- Encouragement
- Rewarded
- Part of a team, organization or cause – deliver excellent care, improve care quality or reduce preventable harm; all of the above.

Can you think of a time when you worked some place where you had those feelings? Or the opposite?

All these motivations and feelings lead to improved performance and greater engagement that perpetuate the quality culture.



# What is Just Culture?

- Balance between human and system accountability
- Promotes reporting risks and unacceptable outcomes and hold people and systems accountable
- Concept promoted by James Reason, *Achieving a Safe Culture: theory and practice*
  - Creates an open, fair, and “just” culture
  - Creates a learning culture
  - Designs safe systems
  - Manages behavioral choices
  - It’s a way of thinking that sees events as opportunities to improve our understanding of risk
    - System vs. behavioral risk





# Accountability for Behaviors

Reckless behavior	At-risk behavior	Human error
Conscious disregard of unreasonable risk	A choice: risk not recognized or believed justified	Inadvertent action: slip, lapse, mistake
Manage through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remedial action</li><li>• Punitive action</li></ul>	Manage through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Removing incentives for at-risk behaviors</li><li>• Creating incentives for healthy behaviors</li><li>• Increasing situational awareness</li></ul>	Manage through changes in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Processes</li><li>• Procedures</li><li>• Training</li><li>• Design</li><li>• Environment</li></ul>
<b>Punish</b>	<b>Coach</b>	<b>Console</b>



# Reinforcing roles in risk, quality and HR

## Risk/Quality

- Helps improve the effectiveness of the learning process
- Provides tools to line managers
- Helps redesign systems

## Human Resources

- Protects the learning culture
- Helps with managerial competencies
  - Consoling
  - Coaching
  - Punishing



# Personal responsibilities in shared accountability environment

- Look for the risks around me
- Report errors and hazards
- Help design safe systems
- Making safe choices
  - Follow procedures
  - Make choices that align with organizational values
  - Never sign-off for something that was not done



## In a culture of QI, we:

- Reinforce the cultural expectations and values through performance evaluations and include in organizational performance evaluations
- Use structured approaches to problem-solving
- Uncover and understand the circumstances that lead to problems
- Create improvements by those who actually do the work
- Understand that most problems are system-based, not a result of an individual
- Cross department lines and break down barriers
- Test and modify changes before widespread implementation
- Produce robust processes that are lasting and sustainable
- Revise and update our work in a continuous cycle of improvement
- Don't let perfection be the enemy of good



# What is a culture of safety?

Commitment to safety that permeates all levels of the entire organization, from the front line personnel to executive management. May include aspects of high reliability organizations, which are organizations or industries outside of health care, such as nuclear power and commercial aviation.

- Acknowledgement of the high-risk, error-prone nature of an organization's activities
- A blame-free environment where individuals are able to report errors or close calls without fear of reprimand or punishment
- An expectation of collaboration across ranks to seek solutions to vulnerabilities
- A willingness on the part of the organization to direct resources to addressing safety concerns



# Is there a difference between a culture of QI and patient safety?

- Relational and correlate
- They are complimentary
- QI leads to patient safety
- Matter of maturity and focus



# What's the impact of a culture of patient safety?

- You can catch errors if you have good systems, processes and teams.
- The best defense is a collegial interactive team.
- It pays to be a little paranoid when you're doing things with high-error potential:
  - I must assume I will make mistakes
  - I must believe that the most likely outcome of my next action will be an error if I'm not mindful
  - If I don't remain focused, this is the time I will get caught.



## Take-a-ways

- Culture defines how things are “done around here” – good or bad
- Culture may support or inhibit quality improvement and safety
- Can’t have a safety culture without a culture of quality
- Determines approach to quality improvement – person vs. systems focused
- Patient safety recognizes the high-risk nature of health care
- Just culture helps address accountability to encourage improved quality and safety
- Culture is the starting point and the environment that allows quality improvement and safety to occur





## Resources

- A Leadership Journey in Health Care, Virginia Mason's Story, Charles Kenny
- Achieving a safe culture: theory and practice, James Reason
- American Society of Quality (ASQ) – <https://asq.org/quality-resources/culture-of-quality>
- Creating a Culture of Quality, Ashwin Srinivasan and Bryan Kurey, Harvard Business Review, April 2014
- Creating a Lean Culture: Tools to Sustain Lean Conversions, David Mann
- Lean Hospitals: Improving Quality, Patient Safety, and Employee Engagement, Third Edition, Mark Graban
- Q Solutions: Essential Resources for the Healthcare Quality Professional. Third Edition
- The Six Values of a Quality Culture, James P. Woods
- Understanding Patient Safety, Robert M. Wachter, MD, McGraw Hill Lange



# Thank you!

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