

Guest Editorial

Leadership in Healthcare

Good leadership is important for the success of any organization. Harold Knootz, Cyril O'Donnell and Heinz Weihrich have called the leadership is the 'art or process of influencing people so that they will survive willingly toward the achievement of group goal'. Actually, it is the process by which people are directed, guided and influenced to achieve stated objectives by successfully implementing a plan of action. In a healthcare organization, good leadership is more than just important—it is absolutely critical to the organization's success. For a healthcare organization, the primary goal is to provide high-quality safe care to those who seek its help, whether they are patients, residents, clients or recipients of care. So, how does leadership influence organizational delivery? Leadership has been described as the behavior of an individual when directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal. Thus, it is important that the leader is extremely clear of the end objectives and the path to be taken to achieve the same. The competency level of healthcare leader should be very high as that will help him to handle complex issues and lead from front.

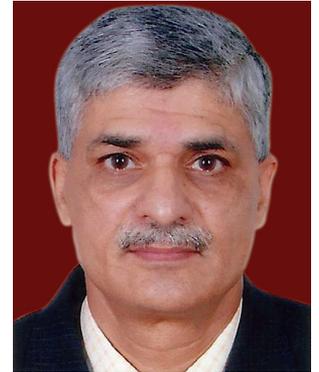
Effective leadership and management have been found to contribute to efficiency of healthcare services, performance and satisfaction of the staff employed within them. Bradley and Alimo Metcalfe (2008) researched the casual relationship between leadership behavior and the performance and productivity of the staff and found that 'engaging leadership' improve employee engagement and performance. This outcome, I have personally seen while serving in different service hospitals. Good leadership skills can provide good impact on patient safety and quality of care. We now have evidence to claim that leadership plays an important and significant role in formulation of a strategy that is driven by quality of healthcare services to be provided to the clientele.

If we want a healthcare organization to succeed, it must be appreciated as a system, the components of which work together to create success. It is not possible to determine what each component should be and do unless it is examined in the light of the goals for the system and the rest of the system's components. Healthcare systems are composed of numerous professional groups, departments and specialties with intricate, nonlinear interactions between them; the complexity of such systems is often unparalleled as a result of constraints relating to different disease areas, multidirectional goals and multidisciplinary staff. Within large organizations, such as healthcare systems, the numerous groups with associated subcultures might support or be in conflict with each other. Leadership needs to capitalize on the diversity within the organization as a whole and efficiently utilize resources when designing management processes, while encouraging personnel to work toward common goals.

Healthcare delivery systems are complex entities that must merge the best of administrative and clinical practices into a new model of leadership. But, despite growing recognition that healthcare organizational leaders must partner with clinical leaders to address patient safety, evidence-based practice, financial sustainability and capacity, tensions between the groups remain. Healthcare is based in large, bureaucratic entities organized in administrative hierarchies with clinical or product line silos that thwart collaboration, limit inter-disciplinary engagement, and foster mistrust. Around the world healthcare accessibility, fragmentation and affordability issues challenge healthcare systems whether they are centralized, socialized systems or free market private and public enterprises. In response to these concerns, healthcare organizations are struggling to address the 'how' of integrating clinician competence in patient management with the financial imperatives of modern day delivery systems. The delivery of healthcare today depends on a growing group of professionals coming together as an interdisciplinary team. At the same time, there are many forces that are shaping the delivery of healthcare. Many of these changes are being driven by the markets, changes in concepts of health and well-being, technology, and research and discovery. Yet, it is only through dynamic leadership that the professions themselves will be in a position to guide these transformations.

Leadership has a significant role in choosing the strategy for implementation. The leadership has to look at the forest and not the trees and take a broader and bolder view while formulating the strategy. The strategy cannot be focused in parts and will have to address all aspects of safe and quality oriented patient centric care. Leadership has to ensure that ownership of strategy is with everyone.

An important characteristic of a good leader is the ability to explore personal and team motives/beliefs in accomplishing a change or perceived vision of success. As part of this process, true leadership requires the ability to critically appraise the team process and outcomes on the path to achieve a shared goal. Leadership requires constant fine tuning of self as well as



reflection on the individual needs and characteristics of the team. Clinicians should have an insight into leadership styles and responsibilities in order to gain a deeper understanding of the attributes required of being or supporting 'leaders' within the organization. A number of leadership approaches can be adapted to the healthcare setting to optimize management in this highly complex environment.

Many theories, cases and models have influenced the current leadership strategies that can be applied to the healthcare setting. Guidance for effective leadership should focus on the dynamic relationships between leadership values, culture, capabilities and the organizational context. The leader's developmental journey must operate within this dynamic, environment supported by a high level of self, team and organizational awareness. Healthcare systems that are serious about transforming themselves must harness the energies of physicians as organizational leaders and physicians who are equal to the task must supplement their medical training with training in business and management.

Current research evidence shows that there is a need for not just formal administrative leadership, but also a need to develop integrated leadership processes throughout healthcare delivery systems.

From my perspective, there is no infallible step-by-step formula for becoming an effective or transformational leader. Leadership requires an understanding of human nature. My assertion is that leadership can be taught and learnt. Specifically, a person can observe and internalize select models of leadership from unique environments, and then use these 'lessons learnt' to foster a potential for leadership by learning about what is worked for others. By selecting 'best practices', one can readily and selectively apply those lessons learned to one's own situation. Many of the contemporary authors who describe the traits, attributes and actions that typify successful leaders can find that virtually all of the current leadership philosophy was recognized thousands of years ago.

Leadership is the central issue since the quality initiative cannot achieve the desired outcomes if there is lack of constant and consistent leadership support at all level for the actions being taken. For effective, as a leader you have to be in possession or information that is relatively accurate, relevant and timely. In addition, leadership is also responsible for providing information to the providers as well as the recipients of healthcare. Leadership has to encourage and monitor adherence to legislation and voluntary adoption of accreditation at varying levels. These will help in changing performance since this would require external assessments and approvals.

The future of healthcare is a topic that has significant importance to patients and caregivers alike for generations to come. As the healthcare industry becomes more complex, leadership and the examination of how to most effectively apply it to meet efficiency standards and optimize the patient experience will become paramount.

As per my opinion, following role should be worth considering for leaders in healthcare:

- Teaching
- Inspiring confidence
- Empowering
- Improving performance — supporting reflection/clinical supervision
- Rewarding and recognizing individual contributions
- Recognizing the needs of the service from clinically-based environment
- Leading an developing services — implementing change
- Supporting the organization and, when necessary, providing a bridge between senior management and team members/employees in informing, supporting and developing national agreed initiatives/government initiatives.

As a leader, I feel following leadership role in setting quality culture in healthcare setting:

- Develop quality culture
- Remove uncertainties and ambiguities
- Develop culture that emphasizes performance improvement
- Make the culture patient centric
- Ensure a blame free culture
- Cultivate the wanted culture by showing commitment, discipline, enthusiasm and involvement
- Resort to story-telling wherever applicable and relevant
- Devise policies and procedures to implement strategy
- Share success stories.

As a leader, one of the most significant roles of leadership in framing a strategy for quality improvement is building of teams. Quality improvement cannot be achieved by one person working alone or groups of persons working in an uncoordinated manner. All leaders in an organization should take following steps in setting quality driven strategy:

- Help in defining mission, vision, goals and plan
- Ensure quality in structure, process and outcomes in an integral part of the strategic plan

- Revise them when necessary
- Develop strategic plan that is aligned with quality
- Prioritise objectives
- Translate overall objectives into departmental objectives
- Annual initiative should be linked with the strategic plan
- Educate and empower all concerned.

Leadership must believe that all sentinel events involve a failure in the systems and processes which led to the event. A healthcare organization's success rests on leadership skills. In order to be successful within this new paradigm, leaders must:

- *Have an understanding of system:* Leaders must be able to identify opportunities for improvement. They must understand how clinical handoffs are supposed to happen, understand where in the care delivery process things go smoothly and can easily identify opportunities for improvement.
- *Understand strategic planning:* They must participate in and be prepared to lead strategic-planning and decision-making sessions. Physician insight into what steps an organization may undertake to accomplish organizational goals, based on improving clinical care delivery using the right resources, is key.
- *Navigate the transition to value-based care:* Leaders must play a significant role in championing the transition from current payment models to value-based care models and will need to understand the nuances of value-based care.
- *Understand data and data analytics:* Leaders must understand data, data warehousing and data analytics. They must be able to use data in order to identify trends and improvement opportunities, make decisions, monitor improvements, and determine whether implemented interventions are having the desired effect.
- *Understand finance:* Under accountable care and other emerging payment models where financial risk is assumed by the entity, an increased understanding of finance is important. Your input into financial decisions and understanding the nuances of such decisions will be extremely important to leading organizations through the transition to value-based care.
- *Manage conflict:* Leaders should be able to identify and manage conflict. Understanding how to gracefully and effectively deal with conflict resolution is a necessary skill during times of change and transition.

Healthcare leaders will inevitably have an impact on the lives of many people, as individuals rely on physicians and nurses during some of the most critical moments in their lives. It is imperative that, in today's healthcare environment, leadership roles will be crucial but preparing good leaders and envisioning their synergy with the vision of the organization is a bigger challenge for us to address.

Leadership at all levels has an all important role of encouraging and generating ideas for doing things in a better manner. This involves generation and spreading of ideas that form the foundation of newer ways of doing things.

Leadership in healthcare is a strategic activity that focuses on framing a shared vision through participation with all stakeholders. It helps in developing organizational structures and processes, in introducing and managing change initiative and in creating capabilities for maintaining and sustaining the quality culture. In nutshell, leadership is not something you do to people, It is something you do with people.

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He is a recognized Postgraduate Teacher of University of Delhi and Pune having a total teaching experience of 22 years, besides being a recognized PhD Supervisor of University of Delhi and Postgraduate Examiner of University of Delhi, Pune, Indraprastha University, Delhi and University of Health Sciences (MUHS), Nashik. He is also a Postgraduate Examiner and Inspector of National Board of Examinations (NBE) and MCI. He has been awarded Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, London (UK).