has forced us to rethink and reimagine ways of maintaining the core values of patient- and family-centered teamwork in critical care.⁵

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Commentary: Teamwork makes the dream work: We learned it in kindergarten, but did we lose it along the way?

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CENTRAL MESSAGE

Team members must put the interest of the team above their own. Health care is not error-free but the ultimate goal is to transform health care into a high-reliability organization.

The expression, teamwork makes the dream work means that a team must have a common goal, a shared mental model, and must work together to achieve it. For a team to be successful, team members must put the interest of the team above their own. These are timeless truths with origins extending far back to the dawn of human evolution. Among the first things we learn as children in kindergarten is the need to work together. While we learn to cooperate with each other as young children, we develop solid skills of problem solving, communication, listening, creativity, and self-esteem. Despite our long evolutionary and personal history of cooperation, we have not yet mastered the concept of teamwork. To create a high-performing team is not an easy task, and the challenges of teamwork have long been recognized. Among the possible reasons for

this breakdown could be the central metaphor used by Jonathan Haidt in his book,¹ *Righteous Mind*: Humans are 90% chimpanzee and 10% bees. During our evolutionary and personal journey, we compete at both an individual and group level simultaneously, and this can create a split in successful teamwork.

In their article, Kennedy-Metz and colleagues² artfully describe the importance of high-performing teams in cardiovascular intensive care units. Cardiovascular intensive care units are “complex, dynamic, and time-pressured” environments, medical care across all landscapes is becoming increasingly more complex, thus requiring high-performing teams across all medical specialties. Safety is a basic patient expectation and right in health care. The landmark publication,³ *To Err is Human*, by the Institute of Medicine showed that the health care is not error-free, and in fact, medical errors are a leading cause of death in the United States. The ultimate goal is to transform health care into a high

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reliability organization (HRO) similar to aviation, and high-performing teams are the essential, basic component of HROs. Kennedy-Metz and colleagues² provide an excellent overview of teams, teamwork, and strategies for promoting teamwork and its effectiveness. They nicely illustrate that simply placing individuals in team-based work will not translate into highly reliable results. To work effectively together, team members must have specific knowledge, technical skills, attitudes, closed-loop communication, and most importantly a “shared mental model.” High-reliability teams must be able to overcome barriers at “individual, environmental, institutional levels, and cultural levels” while working under dynamic and fluid conditions. To add more complexities, team members are not permanent; they often change. Under demanding and complex work conditions there is an urge to simplify, and high-performing teams must resist this urge. Paradoxically, high-performing teams often rely on simple, practical solutions like checklists as a visual, cognitive aid. The checklist itself is a simple, useful tool to decrease errors in high-risk environments, but not foolproof. It is quite common that team members get overwhelmed under crisis management,

and missteps, even in simulated settings. Therefore, high-fidelity simulation with appropriate team debriefing as an excellent team-building tool and it can further decrease errors in real-time situations.

Last but not least, strong leadership is a sine qua non for all high-performing teams and HROs. The basic principles of teamwork are collaboration and equality, and there are no roles for superheroes. In fact, “...the existence of hierarchies and power differences among the team members...may inhibit information exchange...”. Having said this, it should also be recognized that in times of breakdown of the team dynamic, it is important to have strong leadership present to redirect back to positive progress.

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