Commentary: A Time For Change: Purpose, Quality And Change During Times Of Fiscal Austerity

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PII: S0022-5223(22)01047-9
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtcvs.2022.10.002
Reference: YMTC 18797

To appear in: The Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery

Received Date: 1 October 2022
Accepted Date: 3 October 2022


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Commentary: A Time For Change: Purpose, Quality And Change During Times Of Fiscal Austerity

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Word Count: 379

Disclosures: Nothing to Disclose

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**Central Message:** A Time For Change: Proactively improving quality requires a constancy of purpose and willingness to adopt change.

**Central Picture Legend:** A Time for Change

Healthcare systems have a mandate for fiscal austerity while maintaining the delivery of high quality care. Controlling cost in the operating room is a requisite component of a cost savings strategy for health systems. Studies have shown that cost awareness can reduce operating room expenditures. (1,2) In this month’s Journal, Liu and colleagues implemented educational programs to raise surgeon awareness of operating room cost while subsequently applying a positive deviance program to measure the impact. Without decreasing resources nor controlling intraoperative decision-making, the authors reported a significant trend in disposable costs as well as lower operating room time (3), and presumably without untoward adverse events. Many hospitals have attempted to identify ways to make cost-transparency a habit. MD Anderson has created a “Know Your Costs” (KYC) campaign to incorporate behavioral “nudges” into operations, and according to Harvard Business Review, has saved nearly $1 million in supplies in 2018. (4)

Beyond cost savings for a specific surgical procedure, the process of improvement has impact beyond lobectomy. Being aware of performance can drive positive results while maintaining excellence in patient outcomes. Hospitals should continue to develop models that incorporate a surgeon’s competitive mentality and sustain long-term engagement in these policies. While physician-led hospitals account for less than 5% of hospitals with patient experience ratings, they
received 14% of Healthgrades awards for outstanding performance in 2022. (5) Furthermore, CMS HCAHPS data revealed the average patient experience rating was 3.9 for physician-led hospitals, whereas it was 3.2 for all hospitals. (4) It would then stand to reason, that engaging physicians, especially surgeons, would help in not only cost-saving measures, but also patient satisfaction by providing high quality care. This single-institution study has laid a foundation upon which other hospitals could build a sustainable value-based change.

W. Edwards Deming, one of the founders of total quality management, had written about several principles regarding quality which can be adapted to healthcare

1. Maintain a constancy of purpose to improve healthcare
2. Adopt change – embrace new technologies to avoid obsolescence
3. Quality should be proactive

We appreciate the data gleaned from the value-based initiatives of Liu and colleagues and are reminded of several quotes from Deming said, “In God we trust. All others must bring data” and “without data, you’re just another person with an opinion.”
References


