

FOREWORD

Through all of human history, health caregivers have been respected individuals in society. Now with the Internet, consumerism, the Baby Boomers aging, risk adjustment, outcomes measurement, and quality metrics, blind trust in clinicians has begun to erode.

The “Crossing the Quality Chasm” reports (Committee on Quality of Healthcare in America, 2001) by the Institute of Medicine over the past decade have identified the stark reality of errors in the healthcare system—more than 98,000 preventable deaths each year. Although the exact number is disputed, one life lost to error is one too many.

Many in academia, clinical practice, and government have suggested that use of information technology in healthcare is the answer to error reduction. However, information technology by itself can have only a limited impact, unless the information is used for deliberate improvement in healthcare practices. Despite the evidence that IT improves care, basic electronic information about patients remains out of reach for most clinicians.

The rising cost of healthcare and sustained poor quality mandates deployment of better practices and continual improvement in healthcare operations at a much faster rate than historically achieved. There have been many attempts to improve quality in healthcare, but most have been based on management fads and have been unsustainable. Six Sigma methodologies have been deployed successfully in the industrial sector. I believe the healthcare industry can realize similar benefits using Six Sigma. Many healthcare organizations have already benefited from Six Sigma deployment.

The *Improving Healthcare Quality* book offers help. The four coauthors of the book, experts in the excellence, process quality, and healthcare fields, have collaborated nicely to offer a customized approach to implementing Six Sigma in the healthcare industry. The book is very well organized and contains actual cases for ease of learning and application.

I believe *Improving Healthcare Quality* is the most comprehensive book for applying an improvement methodology in healthcare to improve both quality and cost. It is time healthcare professionals—administrators, physicians, and support staff—learn about reputed improvement methodologies and commit to improve healthcare services to clients. We have committed our lives to serve people; we must recommit our abilities to do our best. *Improving Healthcare Quality* will be a vital tool that will enable us to do our best.

I have enjoyed reading the book, and expect the same for you, the reader. I am confident that trust in clinicians and confidence in the healthcare system will markedly increase.

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