Patient Safety and Healthcare Improvement at a Glance

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Healthcare improvement remains the bedrock of any adaptive, learning and high-quality healthcare system. The engagement of frontline clinical staff in advancing this agenda is central to ensuring improvements and safety in care delivery, thereby providing the best possible care for the patient. Since the 1990s, there have been concerted efforts to empower and equip healthcare professionals, carers, students and patients with the knowledge, skills and tools to execute and achieve safer, high-quality, patient-centred care. This book is an attempt to synthesise the key lessons learnt and distil these into practical recommendations.

Influential reports have raised awareness of healthcare quality and safety in the professional and public conscience. Seminal amongst these have been To Err Is Human, produced by the US Institute of Medicine (IOM), and An Organisation with a Memory, produced by the UK Government’s Chief Medical Officer. These reports highlighted that error was routine during the delivery of healthcare and pointed to steps that should be taken to minimise their occurrence and the adverse consequences resulting from these system failures. The IOM advises six aims for quality – safety, effectiveness, efficiency, timeliness, patient-centredness and equity. A focus on patient safety has served as a ‘Trojan horse’ to create urgency for change and highlight the major underlying problems in healthcare, and in doing so it has galvanised the importance of seeking all the aims of quality. More recently, the Institute of Healthcare Improvement (IHI) launched The Triple Aim that challenges healthcare organisations to improve patient experience, improve population health and reduce the per capita cost of healthcare in order to optimise health system performance. Building on this approach, many of our contributors have used the lens of patient safety to highlight concerns about and approaches to enhancing the quality of care provision.

Our hope is that this text – which includes contributions from leading international scholars and clinicians in training – will meet the needs of healthcare students and professionals at all stages of their training: from students and junior doctors who have yet to be introduced to the disciplines of healthcare improvement and patient safety to those who want a quick refresher of core concepts and in areas that would be relevant for healthcare professionals in training. This reflects our core belief that all those serving at the ‘coal face’ of healthcare delivery have the capacity to be the barometers of the quality and safety of healthcare provision.

Finally, we are optimistic that all those who read this book will in some way – whether by initiating, leading or contributing to collective efforts – be inspired to move forward the agenda of safe, high-quality, patient-centred care. It is, after all, these enduring values that ensure we are fitting members of ‘the noble profession’ and that we, like every other generation before us, have fulfilled the charge of ensuring we take stock of preceding efforts, enrich them and then hand on these quintessential values.

Sukhmeet S. Panesar, Andrew Carson-Stevens, Sarah A. Salvilla and Aziz Sheikh
We wish to record our sincere gratitude to our contributors who have taken time away from their many other commitments to share their knowledge and insights. These wonderful colleagues have been a real pleasure to work with, and we wish them all the very best in their future endeavours. We owe particular thanks to colleagues at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Cambridge, USA* who contributed graciously to this book. Any omissions during the editing phase are ours.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our families for their support throughout the conception, gestation and delivery of this book. This work is therefore very much also a fruit of their labours, and we hope that they too will take pride in seeing the ideas contained in this book flourish.

*The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) (www.IHI.org) is an independent not-for-profit organization which hosts the IHI Open School (www.ihi.org/openschool). The School exists to advance quality improvement and patient safety competencies in the next generation of health professionals.
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