

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Michaud and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee today on best practices from the private sector.

Healthcare organizations, both large and small have found that standardizing operations along with standardizing clinical care practices lead to both efficiencies and improved outcomes.

Successful operators in the private sector know they must reduce tolerance for variance, whether it is within a specific department, across departments or across facilities within a division. Further, once a best practice is identified (by measurable outcomes) the path must be opened for it to be scaled across an organization.

These successful leadership teams also recognize that this begins with workforce engagement as studies have shown that a more highly engaged workforce creates both a safer work and a safer care environment. Higher engagement traditionally leads to fewer workarounds which drives safety and, in turn, clinical outcomes.

The path to standardization begins with a strong sense of alignment. Successful organizations' leadership teams know that by focusing on fewer vs. more goals allows for clear communication, clear expectations for middle leaders and a clear path to execution on those goals.

While establishing clear goals and metrics (with emphasis on outcomes vs. process measures) is important, the best leadership teams understand the importance of "connecting to purpose", and thus are able to create buy-in and ownership of front-line leadership and front-line associates. Connecting to purpose allows the front-line associates (whether patient-facing or in support service areas) to keep the patient at the center of their work.

We learn much of what we know about standardizing practices within healthcare from our physician colleagues. Physician leaders will tell you that the greater good of the organization and patient care should always trump individual autonomy. Strong medical groups are quick to address colleagues practicing outside a body of evidence. The VA would be well served to follow this model and move quickly and strongly to diagnose, create a treatment plan and standardize certain operational and clinical practices across the enterprise.

Key Elements/Areas of Focus:

- Action, Alignment, Accountability
- Culture of High Performance
- Current VA issues: Access, Pre communication, post communication, etc.
- Efficiencies = higher quality= expense reduction