Creating a Relational Playbook for Cardiology Teams to Enhance Employee Well-being and Veteran Care

Heather M. Gilmartin, PhD, NP  
*Investigator, Research Health Scientist*  
Denver/Seattle Center of Innovation  
Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center

*Assistant Professor*  
Department of Health Systems, Management and Policy  
Colorado School of Public Health  
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

@hgrnepi  
@seadencoin
Disclosures

The following speakers disclose no actual or potential conflicts of interest in relation to this program/presentation:

Heather Gilmartin, Ph.D., NP

The contents of this presentation do not represent the views of the Department of Veterans Affairs or the United States Government.

The project described was supported by Career Development Award Number 1IK2HX002567-01A1 from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Health Services Research & Development Service of the VA Office of Research and Development.
VA selects 18 medical facilities to start ‘high reliability’ journey

Initiative creates safe industry-wide environments with robust continuous process improvements
Current State ----------- Future

• Data & analytics
• Focus on leadership training
• Big picture concepts
  • Just Culture
  • High Reliability
• Clinical teams are exhausted, understaffed, burned out

There is a pressing need to change the way clinical teams work... right now.
Can you change the culture of a team toward learning and high reliability?
VA cardiac cath labs are high risk, high cost and high value clinical settings

This survey study investigated the learning environments and reliability enhancing work practices in VA cath labs.

Supportive Learning Environments

• Build capabilities for teaching and learning

• Empower teams to:
  • Safety try new things
  • Adopt reliability enhancing work practices

Reliability Enhancing Work Practices

- Hiring for communication abilities & interpersonal skills
- Allow control over their work
- Cultivate relationships and trust

Learning Environments and Use of High Reliability Practices in the VA

**National Survey Study**

68 of 81 cath labs (84% response rate)

N=296 MDs, RNs, Techs

**STUDY SETTING**

VA CARDIAC CATH LABS

Data + Analytics + Reporting + Quality & Safety Monitoring

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Do Cath Lab Learning Environments Differ?

Do Cath Labs use High Reliability Practices?

**RESULTS**

Yes - Learning Environments Differ

- Experimentation
- Forums for learning
- Psychological safety
- Leadership that supports learning

Yes - High Reliability Practices Used

- Affective commitment
- Mindful organizing
- Organizational citizenship

---

Site Level Analysis (n=29)

- Factor Analysis
- Linear Models
- Bayesian methods

Learning Environments + Reliability Enhancing Work Practices Impact on Employee Engagement and Safety Climate

Observational Survey Study
67 of 81 cath labs (83% response rate)
N=231 MDs, RNs, Techs

RESEARCH QUESTION
Are supportive learning environments + reliability enhancing work practices (REWPs) associated with higher engagement, retention & safety climate?

STUDY SETTING
VA Cardiac Cath Labs

Supportive Learning Environments + REWPs =
- Higher job satisfaction
- Lower burnout
- Lower intent to leave
- Lower turnover
- Higher safety climate

DOI: 10.1111/1475-6773.13907
Cath Lab Interview Guide (13 managers/6 cath labs)

- **Teamwork**
  - Examples of “above and beyond” work
  - Examples of strong teamwork

- **Staffing**
  - How do you hire, retain, grow talent?
  - Are staff hired for certain characteristics

- **Communication**
  - Communication challenges
  - Training on communication and interpersonal skills

- **Training**
  - Example of recent trainings
  - Processes in place (briefings, reviews)
Interview Themes

Create a Positive Culture

Build a Team

Lead the Team

Create Joy in Work

Communicate Effectively & Use High Reliability Practices
A RELATIONAL PLAYBOOK FOR CARDIOLOGY TEAMS

5 Chapter eBook
- Creating a Positive Culture
- Teamwork
- Leading Teams
- Creating Joy in Work
- Communication & High Reliability

- Resources
- 50 research-based interventions

VA Tech Transfer Registered Invention - VA ID: 2022-474
… he brings this positive attitude that I've never been able to see in anybody else, where he's just always relaxed, he's always kind of cracking a joke, just to make people relaxed.

But you ask him a question and he's spot on all the time.

38-year-old Cath Lab Nurse Manager, 7 years in VA
OVERVIEW: CREATING A POSITIVE CULTURE

• We think too much about what goes wrong and not enough about what goes right in our lives. Of course, sometimes it makes sense to analyze bad events so that we can learn from them and avoid them in the future.

• However, teams tend to spend more time thinking about what went bad than is helpful. The tendency to focus on bad events can create a negative culture that results in anxious employees that negatively impacts innovation, learning, and patient safety.

• One way to keep this from happening is to develop a team’s ability to think about the good parts of work.

Seligman, 2005; Diener, 2013
PRACTICE: THREE GOOD THINGS

Team-focused Intervention

- During weekly team meetings, or huddles, ask the following question - then listen for themes and encourage group discussion.
  - What is one good thing so far this week?

Individual-focused Intervention

- During 1-on-1 meetings ask a colleague to reflect on the good parts of their work
  - Access the “Three Good Things app”
  - Daily for 7 days list three good things that went well on that day and why they happened

Seligman, 2010; Sexton, 2019; VanderWeele, 2020
Relational Playbook – Next Steps

1. Feasibility & Acceptability Testing (Pilot IIR)
2. Relational Playbook Website (VA BRAVE funds)
3. Mobile Application with Whistle Systems (CRADA)
4. Relational Playbook for SimLEARN Education (Operational Partnership)
5. Effectiveness Testing on Burnout, Turnover, Variation in Care (VA IIR)
Acknowledgements

Cathy Battaglia
Brigid Connelly
Marguerite Daus
Ed Hess
Chelsea Leonard
Tom Maddox
Meg Plomondon
Steve Waldo

Russ Glasgow
Jodi Holtrop
Bethany Kwan
Built to Learn Project
Clinical Data Knowledge Learning Cath Lab
High-Reliability Cardiology Patient Care Healthcare

THANK YOU

Heather.Gilmartin@va.gov