

HIGHLIGHTS
American Hospital Association
22nd Annual Health Care Systems Leadership Retreat
October 27-28, 2005

“Leading the Way to High Performing Health Systems”

Background

This year’s 22nd Annual Health Care Systems Leadership Retreat, ***Leading the Way to High Performing Health Systems***, focused on the topics of Enhancing Quality of Care, Physicians and Systems Working Together, and Organizational Accountability. With 70 participants, the Retreat continued the tradition of providing AHA health system colleagues an opportunity to directly advise the AHA Health Care Systems governing council, the AHA Board of Trustees and executive management on key system-related policy and advocacy strategies, as well as time to network and learn from each other.

Adaptive Leadership

Ronald Heifetz, M.D., co-founder of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government and co-author of *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading*, began the Retreat by differentiating technical problems from adaptive challenges and then describing nine properties of an adaptive challenge. The classic error of treating adaptive challenges as though they were technical problems was described as well as leadership tasks involved in identifying adaptive change, disciplining attention, developing responsibility, and regulating disequilibria in order to infuse work with meaning.

Ron’s theory that leadership generates leadership is predicated on the idea that people experience a measure of loss or incompetence to change and will often avoid adaptive work by diverting attention away from the issues that generate frustration and conflict. Real leadership requires getting people to assume greater responsibility and feel committed to the work they are doing, without feeling overwhelmed at one extreme or stagnant at the other. Ron provided examples in our culture and within the health care industry of leaders who put themselves on the line, challenged long held beliefs and responded effectively to risks by demanding new ways of doing things, and lived to celebrate their efforts. Additional discussion, cases, and further reading can be found at www.cambridge-leadership.com.

Enhancing Quality of Care

Participants attended small group dialogue sessions on **Enhancing Quality of Care** with system executive colleagues to hear about successful initiatives in enhancing quality of care and to discuss lessons learned. Presentations were given by William Fulkerson, M.D., CEO of Duke University Hospital and Vice President of Duke University Health System in North Carolina, on pay for performance, the CMS/Premier Hospital Quality Incentive Demonstration Project and lessons learned to date; Michael Rock, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, Mayo Rochester Hospital in Minnesota and colleagues on minimizing clinical variation and its impact on quality; and Mary Starmann-Harrison, Regional President/CEO, SSM Health Care in Wisconsin, on her system’s impact on quality, what is working, what is not and the road ahead.

Physicians and Systems Working Together

Issues of **Physicians and Systems Working Together** were also explored among colleagues, by examining new ways to enhance hospital-physician relations, including technology, improving physician productivity, and physician group structures. System-specific case examples included: Robert Laskowski, M.D., President and CEO, Christiana Care Health System, talked about physician autonomy in practice by sharing new models for employed physician groups; and Nancy Howell Agee, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Carilion Health System, shared experiences in their commitment to clinical excellence with teletracking, an emergency department information system, ambulatory electronic medical record, picture archive communication system/voice recognition system, and radiology reporting improvements.

The Commonwealth Fund Commission on a High Performance Health System

Stephen Schoenbaum, M.D., M.P.H., Executive Vice President for Programs at The Commonwealth Fund, shared with participants the charge, membership, goals and expected products of the Commonwealth Fund's new Commission by exploring the challenges and opportunities of the current U.S. health care system, including issues of coverage and access, quality of care, health care expenditures, and the relationship between quality and cost or efficiency. Deborah Devaux, Senior Vice President of Health Care Services Contracting at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, offered insights on current programs to incent quality improvements aimed at eliminating waste and increasing quality. Working collaboratively with all stakeholders and improving safety and effectiveness underlie their performance programs designed to maximize payment based on achieving objectives.

Retreat participants commented on the need to include consumer representation in the development of an effective health care system. They acknowledged the need for fundamental change that underscores the importance of universal coverage, incentives based on a full continuum of quality, and the need to galvanize the political will necessary to convince the public and politicians that we have a sincere desire in creating an effective and transparent health care system.

Enhancing Public Trust / Building Public Confidence: Roundtable Dialogue

George Lynn, President and CEO, AtlantiCare Health System, and 2005 AHA Chairman, discussed current and future activities of the AHA Board. He provided an overview of the hospital response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, including the Care Fund; a Board issues update on the AHA Quality Center and health care information technology; and opportunities available to health care leaders and senior managers to further their own education and skills and help provide safer and high quality health care, through opportunities at the Health Research and Education Trust. Carmela Coyle, AHA Senior Vice President, provided an update on AHA's advocacy activities, including immediate field priorities, drivers of future change, and leadership opportunities. Joseph "Chip" Marshall, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Temple University Health System in Pennsylvania, shared his perspectives as the only CEO of a leading academic health system on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Medicaid Advisory Commission on the work of the Commission and its potential impact on the health industry.

James Skogsbergh, President and CEO, Advocate Health Care in Illinois, and Sister Laura Wolf, President and CEO, Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity Healthcare Ministry in Wisconsin, shared with members their organizations' experiences of working with their communities to build trust and improve organizational accountability to their patients, employees, and communities at large. They both addressed ways they demonstrate value to the communities they serve and provided efforts undertaken to clearly report their community benefit through tools such as the Community Benefit Reporting tool developed by the VHA and Catholic Health Association.

The meeting concluded with a roundtable dialogue of members' reactions to the retreat and morning's presentations. Challenges for the coming year were identified and discussed. Members offered issues/topics for the 2006 retreat discussion that include economic benefit of systems to their communities, leadership and organizational cultural change, readiness, medical staff evolution, and enlistment of the business community as a health care partner.

Recognition and thanks were given to the Retreat sponsors, GE Health Care, IDX Systems Corporation, and Walgreens for their generosity and to all the Retreat's presenters, discussion group leaders and participants.