The AHA Physician Alliance regularly convenes senior physician executives as part of its Physician Leadership Circle for high-level conversations around issues facing physician leaders. Many issues in health care relate to human behavior: the decisions and actions patients, providers, and other actors take and make. Behavioral science offers insights into behavior-based problems and can inspire fresh, cost-effective solutions with significant impact. The group recently discussed common health care challenges and how behavioral science can drastically move the needle. Below are highlights.

Any change must start with the why.
In health care, we tend to focus on the challenge, rather than why overcoming that challenge matters to patients, providers and the community. Then, we force adaptations to get to get to the goal which are hard to sustain. By reframing focus on why, organizations and teams can better see barriers, understand the process to remove those barriers and communicate more effectively.

We don’t hate change. We hate poorly executed change.
We live in task overload and to create lasting change, organizations must structure choices that provide an easy path to the preferred result. Such architecture must be relevant and meaningful to the audience, framed within the existing context. For example, machine learning and AI can help, but they have to be part of the workflow, not outside or parallel to it.

Attention is today’s currency. Use it wisely.
Change strategies cannot be a one-off; that’s a waste of everyone’s time. Change – particularly strategies based in behavioral science – must be part of system design to lead to cultural change. Fundamentally, behavioral science is about improved teamwork and communication. This concept is the foundation of successful collaborative programs such as the AHA’s Team Training. Organizations learn how to build the scaffolding to contextualize training and embed it in workflow.

Effective behavioral design efforts share six key characteristics:

Top-level Buy-in  Domain/Behavioral Expertise  Key Stakeholder Partnerships  Data support  IT support  Portfolio of Varied Projects

Physician leaders affiliated with AHA member organizations are invited to be part of these Leadership Circle events. Please email physicianalliance@aha.org to find out more about upcoming events and be part of this exclusive group. Visit www.aha.org/physicians for more information, tools and resources from the AHA Physician Alliance.