Hardwiring improvement to achieve exceptional outcomes: Staff as leaders driving performance (Panel)

In the current healthcare environment, organizations are challenged to improve quality while containing costs and delivering on exceptional experiences and outcomes for patients, families and staff. Increasingly, organizations are utilizing process improvement methods to improve performance in quality and safety. But there is often a disconnect between those driving change and the direct care clinicians (nurses, physicians, allied health) who are challenged to implement these changes. In a recent publication, Zimmerman et al (2013) suggest that "front line ownership" is critical to ensuring a culture of safety; that clinicians themselves must be provided the time and support to identify and take ownership of issues, and to develop and innovate solutions.

This panel will discuss the experiences of two organizations who have driven process improvement through front line ownership utilizing the National Health Services’ (NHS) Releasing Time to Care© (RTC) program. The RTC program is a catalyst for change and transformation with a focus on improving unit processes and environments to enable clinicians to spend more time on direct patient care. RTC helps clinical teams identify where they are spending time on activities that do not add value for patients. These may include duplicate charting, searching for information and equipment, and dealing with numerous interruptions. Through the implementation of RTC, staff acquired the knowledge, tools and ability to identify and approach problems. Additionally, they learn how to gather information from colleagues, stakeholders, patient safety experts and literature to design potential improvements. Using process improvement methods, front line leaders then facilitate the testing, implementation and evaluation of changes. The overarching goals of the initiative are to improve patient safety and experience, staff well-being, and the efficiency and effectiveness of care. The development of a continuous improvement culture promotes a philosophy where all staff takes responsibility for delivering high quality care.

Using a sustainability framework, the panelists will share experiences and outcomes focused on the processes, staffing and organizational issues that are critical in enabling and sustaining improvement and change in healthcare. The panel will speak from the differing perspectives of organizational quality management, unit leadership and direct care staff. They will describe how point of care staff engage with their peers and stakeholders, taking ownership of transformation and safety in the care environment. Using examples and sharing outcomes from improvements, participants will learn about the critical success factors in driving and sustaining unit based improvement activities. The panel will share how learning's from these organizations and RTC can be translated across any organization seeking to improve patient value and experience through the use of process improvement methods. Successfully hardwiring improvements requires both staff ownership and leadership support to enable and sustain change.