Contents

Transitions and Transformations: Making Sense of Change in Health Care

Change is not a season; it is a way of life.

Anonymous

BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING

This is not a book about change. Instead, it is a text that helps us deal with change. Almost any book or article written on health care topics today deals with understanding or explaining the changes that are happening all around us. This book does not intend to do that. Instead, we assume that you understand that change is occurring and are in some way involved in creating response to it. What is needed, therefore, is some help with how to do that.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION

This chapter provides a backdrop for translating some of the changes into a language and framework that the reader can begin to apply. We take a look at what is unfolding and begin to get a picture of the circumstances of the change and a stronger idea of the appropriate response to it.

    The problem with the current change cycle is twofold. First, so much change is occurring that it is difficult to sort through it; second, this change often is filled with such complexity that becomes difficult to find the key elements that serve as the driving forces for the change.

Change is a constant; it never stops, nor does it ever go away. To manage change you have to first embrace it.

WORDS*of*WISDOM

We are experiencing a world change. This means that everything in our world is undergoing significant shifts. The challenge for each of us is to search for the meaning that lies at the heart of the changes and ask ourselves how it impacts us and what will be our response.

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BOX **1-1**

Real Change
• Is sustainable • Builds on the past • Affects behavior • Addresses everyone • Cannot be ignored • Must be embraced • Is clearly defined • Is a journey

WORDS*of*WISDOM

Change is challenging. It requires energy and commitment and can be ignored only at great personal expense. Accepting the change is the first step to successfully applying it to your own life.

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The role of the leader is to translate changes to the staff, to find the meaning in the changes, and to get support and investment in those activities that facilitate the necessary changes. The two arenas for real change are form and behavior. Both must be altered in some measure to accommodate and implement change.

But what changes are real and enduring? How do we distinguish between the faddish and fashionable changes and the real, sustainable changes? (See Box 1-1.) Because of the amount of work required to implement any change, there simply is not the time or energy to spend on responses that are not meaningful.

SUSTAINING CHANGE

One of the primary roles of a leader is to discern the difference between what is short term and what is permanent. Managing work effort, which moves between responding to appropriate changes and implementing structure and process related to these changes, is a challenging activity at best. Leaders need the assurance that the path on which they have embarked will lead them to a more desirable state, resulting in the enhancement of work and the improvement of life. If this path accomplishes neither, the stakeholders in the change effort will lose interest in doing anything to promote possible change events.

For change to be clearly seen, it is important to have the proper frame of reference. In a change as significant as that which we are currently experiencing, we cannot use the context for viewing this change in the same way we have in the past. This change is broader and deeper than that which we have experienced previously, and our vision of the change is not adequate to see it appropriately (Box 1-2).

A NEW WAY OF SEEING

Our experience and insights tell us how what we see now compares to what and how we have seen things in the past. Our experiences validate what we are currently seeing and help us find meaning in it. However, we often see things for which our experience is inadequate to translate because

what we see differs greatly from what we know; there is not sufficient context to help us translate what we see with any meaning. This scenario creates chaos as we try to sort out what we are seeing and search for some way to connect with it and find meaning in it.

TOWARD A NEW AGE

We are leaving the Industrial Age and moving toward an age that is still unclear to us but continues unfolding before us. Embedded in the journey to the new age are some very interesting circumstances.

It is difficult to embrace an age of change. Such an age confronts our sensibilities and threatens our stability. Our values, ways of knowing, experience, and belief systems were developed in the age we are leaving, and the journey is threatening.

Imagine what it means to leave a place that you know well, have grown up in, and have learned all of its intricacies, intimacies, and idiosyncrasies. Think about how it feels to have all of your values assaulted, experiences challenged, and knowledge diminished. This is what is contained within the context of an age change.

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Embracing Change

* Read the signposts.
* Assess your own response.
* Ask questions about what is happening.
* Read the journals and newspapers.
* Watch what others are doing.
* Talk it over with others.
* Keep an eye on how your work is changing.
* Get involved with the change makers.
* List your own strengths and needs.
* Rest and stay motivated.

BOX **1-2**

Change Is
1. Sociopolitical
2. Economic
3. Technical

Leaders must distinguish between what is real, sustainable change and what is simply faddish.

WORDS*of*WISDOM

The experience of transformation is like leaving home and living on your own for the first time. The world is the same but everything that tells you about it is now different and requires a response that no one else can provide for you. It is all about you now!

WORDS*of*WISDOM

The best way to make change work for us is to know as much about it as we can. We can do this by looking for all the indicators of change in the circumstances around us and applying the changes within that context. If it does not fit, we either must change what we are doing or examine the change more closely.

- *Technology has significantly altered our work, our lives, and our experiences.*
- *Communication systems have created a global community and have internationalized much of what was once local or national in design and function.*
- *Boundaries do not mean much anymore. The information infrastructure of society has contributed to the creation of a boundaryless world.*
- *Information is now the medium of exchange in a knowledgeable world. People with the right information can do anything they need to do anywhere it needs to be done.*
- *Building the information infrastructure will be the defining work of the next two decades. Organizations and systems will be radically moved from their identification with bricks and mortar structures to information-based structures.*
- *Workers are as important to the future as any other factor. Human capital is the growing essential medium of success for the future of enterprise on the global stage.*

READY FOR A JOURNEY

The challenge of change is to be able to engage the process of change at the right time and to understand the change as it confronts us. Furthermore, change requires a willingness to engage it in ways that bring sense and meaning to our experience.

During an age change, finding sense in the change is complicated because the change does not look like anything with which we are familiar. We are confronted with new content, character, and context. The emergence of the new age challenges what we know and have accepted as right and appropriate. Indeed, this new age requires us to see differently if we are to find the real meaning and impact of the change on our lives.

In this age change several significant issues have a major impact on our future.

The journey to a new age will certainly be exciting. It will also be traumatic.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

On the edge of a new age there is as much to be gained as there is to be lost. Since all of us were born in the Industrial Age, the journey into the new age will be challenging and "noisy."

All of our conceptual, formative, developmental, and experiential processes developed in the age that we are leaving. The challenge here is more than taking *the journey* into a new age. Indeed, much of how we see the journey, give it form, name its characteristics, and identify our role depends specifically on how we construct our response.

Much of what is emerging in this new age represents a way of thinking and knowing that fundamentally differs from past experiences. As stated previously, our greatest challenge is to be able to reflect the characteristics of the new age, not with what we know of the past, but with what we are willing and able to see in the emerging context. A number of strategies will be necessary to make this shift into what is essentially a new reality.

- Recognize that what we have experienced in the Industrial Age is no longer sufficient to the search for meaning in the new age.

- Being available to the changes is more important than being able to clearly define them. This means seeing the change in its own context rather than one we would create out of past experience.
- Continuously re-examining our perceptions, preconceived notions, and biases as an increasing weight of evidence calls us to a different place from that which we currently occupy.
- Embracing the challenge of the chaos in thinking and applying change, knowing that we are constructing the journey as we go and evaluating it in light of the outcomes we achieve.
- Disattaching ourselves from job content or processes as evidence suggests a need for altering them. Better defining ourselves by virtue of the outcomes achieved unbinds our blind identification to activity.
- Increasingly engaging other stakeholders in the dialogue of change. Sustainability will demand collective commitment and action from those who must give the new age form and function.

MOURNING THE LOSS

A shift of this significance cannot unfold without a great deal of conflict, uncertainty, and personal discomfort. On an almost daily basis, newspapers report on issues resulting from this shift: loss of jobs, mergers of well known institutions, economic and fiscal pressures, changes in social mores, and increase in cultural diversity, to name a few.

Furthermore, going to work brings no relief; indeed, it increases the stress. The fear that comes from anticipating the changes in the workplace and uncertainty about the future of the job creates a tension that is palpable. Not knowing is more difficult than implementing a change one already knows. The stability of the job and the content of work in the past could be counted on as a constant that provided some sense of permanence. With work redesign and restructuring, everyone is now thrown into a cauldron of changing relationships, new roles and functions, and the challenge of more change yet to come.

WORDS*of*WISDOM

We cannot make change without making noise. Change is not a quiet experience!

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Necessary Losses

- *Old rituals*
- *Past routines*
- *Functions*
- *Position*
- *Job*
- *External security*
- *Location*
- *Permanence*
- *Certainty*
- *Guarantees*

Much of what is unfolding is an essential shift to a new reality. The chaos of these changes serves a real purpose. While this purpose is not terribly comforting, it is necessary. The chaos that exists in the moment between the "old" and the "new" serves to unbundle our attachment to what we are leaving. It creates a critical "noise" in the system that does not allow us to stay where we are. In some ways it forces us to confront the essential need for the change and our response to it. The key position between making the change and not moving creates the conditions that make action necessary. Sustainable action responds tightly to the change event. Nonsustainable response reacts to the change and contests its legitimacy and its impact on each of us. Reaction does not stop the change; rather, it simply delays our response to it.

People will hold on to what needs to be changed or will continue to revisit it if there is not sufficient time spent enumerating the losses embedded in the change and mourning the passing of practices, experiences, and relationships that exemplified the previous set of circumstances. Leaders must allow the staff and each other the time and space necessary to honor and mourn the loss if people are in any way to engage the changes they need to make without the encumbrances of yesterday.

Although mourning the passing of rituals and routines must be allowed, we cannot and should not mourn forever. The worst thing that could happen in the change journey is to become stuck in the passing and mourning of yesterday's experiences. A defined set of activities and a clear delineation of the time spent with loss is necessary (Box 1-3). Just as necessary is the need to move on at the appointed time. There must be a defined time established for that mourning period. Knowing the rules of passing is important to the stakeholders so that all can understand the expectation to work toward the appropriate response to the necessary changes.

MAKING SENSE OF THE FUTURE

People are much more willing to make a change if they can understand what that change means to them. Meaning is critical to positive response

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BOX **1-3**

Letting Go

- Spend time with the change; get to understand it.
- Talk about what the change requires and what will happen.
- Personalize the change; make it mean something to you.
- Engage in a symbolic process that mourns the loss and allows it to pass.
- Let the old process go and close the door on it so you can focus on the new process and behaviors.

to change. The important role for a leader is to be able to translate the circumstances and conditions driving change in a language that can be understood by those who must undertake it (Team Tip 1-1).

The challenge for all agents in communicating change is their own understanding of it. All too often they struggle with sorting out what the change means and how it will impact them and their role. One of the characteristics of a good leader is the ability to manage personal uncertainty even while helping others deal with change. Translating, interpreting, and discussing the changes and challenges with staff members strengthen the relationship with and support of the staff and further refine everyone's understanding of the changes and their willingness to confront these changes together.

This notion of collective relationship is essential to the appropriate and sustainable response to change. Leadership must always know that even more important than clarity about the future is the willingness to be present to each other and to gather and offer mutual, individual, and collective support as people move together through the challenge of change.

In health care some specific changes are radically altering health service structures for the foreseeable future. The focus of this book is not to discuss these changes in great detail, but it is important to know what they are:

- Managed care is requiring all health services to be sensitive to the cost of providing services and to manage resources more effectively.
- Contracting for patients (managed lives) allows providers to know their patients before they serve them and to match services more closely to the needs of those served.
- Prepaying for services now requires that providers make better choices with patients about what services are provided and when and where these services should be offered. Knowing your patients (subscribers) means serving them before they become sick, thereby reducing both cost and intensity of service.
- Hospitals will no longer be the center of health care activity and will continue to decrease their numbers of beds. Indeed, the number of hospitals will decline.

TEAM**TIP**   1.1

Leader's Role in Communicating Change

- Make sure you understand the change.
- Clarify any ambiguous elements before communicating with staff members.
- Make the change simple to understand.
- Share the change with staff members as soon as possible.
- Be frank and honest; no secrets allowed.
- Raise issues and concerns regarding the change and confront these issues at the outset.
- Communicate more information as you know it; do not hold back.

Be clear that the information you share about a change is accurate. Staff members hear so many rumors that they become uncertain. They need the assurance that what they respond to is correct and meaningful.

Have a Commitment to Experimentation

- Be open to explore new ways of thinking about work.
- Be willing to challenge current activities.
- Engage in dialogue with others about how different activities might work.
- Test new approaches and techniques to clinical activities.
- Evaluate outcomes of new processes to determine what works and what does not.

- Alternative, decentralized, portable service models will be created to better serve people where they work and live.
- Building the continuum of care for subscribers will require growing alliances, partnerships, and networks of services configured along the continuum to intersect with each other and patients in a more flexible, fluid, and comprehensive manner.
- Integration of service structures around patients will alter forever the design of services and systems and throw professionals and other providers together to sort out a new relationship built around the patient along the continuum of services.
- All people in health care will be required to change.

Clearly, significant changes are ahead in health service provision. In almost every conceivable way the system is changing around every role. In addition to the age change and the relentless forces of technology pushing at our backs, newer models of relationships and services are being constructed. Experimentation and innovation demand stretching and risking; testing newer approaches, models, structures, and relationships; and calling staff members to test what they do not yet fully comprehend. These are the circumstances of the time.

NO LONGER DOING MORE WITH LESS

How many times have we heard ourselves say that we must learn to do more with less? Too often we have said it to others when we did not have sufficient answers to their legitimate questions. Of course, it is not possible to do more with less forever. Given enough time, we would only end up do nothing with nothing.

As we move inexorably into a new age for work and health care, we will need to act differently. Indeed, we must fundamentally change what most of us are doing. It is no longer appropriate to simply continue to do work without carefully examining what the work is and what its impact is on achieving desirable and sustainable outcomes.

New circumstances and conditions call for new behaviors and expecta-

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New Age for Health Care

These times call for a change in vision. The problem is that the context for the vision can often reflect what we understand of the "old ways" of seeing. The leader must try to visualize through "new eyes," looking from the perspective of the world into which we are moving. We will need:

- *Accurate information*
- *Proper tools*
- *An open mind*
- *Every role is subject to change. The leader must get all people to address their own needs in the change.*

What is different about the expectations for service, and how do these expectations affect what I do?

What is different in the environment of my work, and what response is it demanding of me?

What is the fit between what I am and have to offer and the changing demands on me as health service changes?

What do I need to learn to adapt or incorporate into my practice or work to better meet the emerging demands?

How have I personalized the changes to make sure I am aware of my responses, challenges, and need to change?

tions. A changing approach for providing services calls each of us to ask a different set of questions about who we are and the work we do.

The real "noise" of change is that it is always upon us and confronts us at times we may think are inappropriate or when we are unprepared for its effect on us. We are reminded that change is the only constant in the uni-

TEAM**TIP**   1.2

Making a Difference

People want to make a difference with their lives. This implies having meaning in the work they do. The leader should make sure to:

- Tell the truth about the change.
- Help people build the change into their work.
- Show how the change is better or different.
- Allow people to discover the best way to apply the change.

Remember that the care provider is interested in the impact of change on the patient and patient care. Ultimately the provider wants to do good work. Anything that appears to impede the ability to provide good service will run into serious trouble in its implementation. Opportunities to sabotage the process are automatic if the change agent does not give solid evidence that the change will not hurt patient care.

verse, and one of the questions change does not ask (because there is no answer) is whether we like it or not. Whether or not we like the change will not alter it or make it go away. Change is the eternal wind of the universe, chaos is its music, and transformation its song.

Finding meaning in our work requires not getting caught up in tasks and functions. Work is not tied into *what* we do but what we *achieve* (Team Tip 1-2). The outcome of our work is the final measure of its viability. If we are busy with many things and yet there is little evidence of impact or value, what does it matter how busy we are? "Busyness" does not in itself lend anything meaningful or desirable to our work.

If we are not busy with those things that make a difference and lead to some preferable result, where is the value in our work? Holding on to functions and activities that do not lead us to where we need to go, or result in what we thought we expected, keeps each of us on an activity treadmill—running hard but going nowhere.

Meaning in what we do is found in the connection between our activity and the purposes and outcomes to which that action is directed. The tightness of fit between what we do and what we achieve is the highest measure of effectiveness. In health care we increasingly see the need for a clear delineation between the work of health professions and the attainment of some desirable and sustainable outcome for those we serve. Today we need to have a more sustainable and cost-effective impact. This often means doing our work earlier in our relationship with the patient and doing things differently at that earlier point of service.

This earlier and different interaction with the patient will facilitate reduced cost and intensity, and reduced bed-based service, thereby keeping the patient from using hospital and high-intensity interventions to the fullest extent possible. That is not possible without changing what we do and how we do it. Our outcomes now change processes, activities, and functions. Without overstating this truth, outcomes change all we do and cause us to think critically about how we contribute to this emerging frame of reference for providing health care services.

TEAMS ARE EVERYTHING

In the emerging continuum of care, teams will be the essential unit of service (Box 1-4). Horizontal connections between providers and patients is the defining model for the future of health care services. The membership and construction of teams becomes the critical work of the organization.

In team-based pursuits, the models for service and organization radically change. No longer can the system be designed in a way that does not focus energies on the point-of-service and the primary relationship with those whom the system serves.

Team-based approaches conflict with almost everything that currently reflects the structure and relationships in hospitals and other components of the health care system. Several components of the system will have to be removed or "deconstructed" because they impede the creation of sustainable structures and relationships around the point-of-service in health care.

Clinical departments and discipline-specific structures prevent the formation of essential horizontal relationships between the professionals in a way that can more effectively serve the consumer.

Physicians, historically outside the cycle of relationships within the service system, have had no clearly enumerated accountability for outcomes and cost-effective performance.

Each of the disciplines have specific service standards and practices that have little relationship to each other. Each has a piece of the patient in the past; there has been little evidence of their interface with each other.

Organizational measures of performance and reward have always been individualized. As a result, these measures focus on the individual's work rather than value the integration of work activities between providers, all of whom offer some service to the patient.

In the past, no relationship between the rewards attached to positions and the outcomes of work or the impact on clinical results tied directly to the patient. No connection exists between what people do and what they are paid.

Organizations and their managers have acted primarily like parents in relationship to their staff members, thereby creating systems code-

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Organizations must attach rewards to performance in the future. There is simply no justification for paying for roles whose work outcomes are unknown. In the future rewards will reflect:

- *Competence*
- *Performance*
- *Relationships*
- *Outcomes*
- *Value*

Staff will make more decisions at the point-of-service in the future. The leader will need to make sure that staff members have the information and resources necessary to make the right decision the first time. Resource competency is no longer the strict province of the manager. Every member of the system has some accountability for the stewardship and use of resources.

pendency, subordinacy, and the resultant nonownership in workers regarding the value or productivity of their efforts. Simply inviting participation does not create ownership or investment in the worker. A shift in the locus of control does just that.

The design of a management chart and table of organization does not support the development and creation of an integrated, team-based, interdisciplinary service model. Moving decisions into the team's hands will accomplish this, but the losses to administration and management often impede or slow the process. Staff members are busy holding on to what they did in the past model of illness care. Now that the opportunity to expand roles, shift function, and advance accountability is available, staff members often object to the loss of ritual and routine that increasingly have no role or value in the emerging paradigm of health service.

The effort to configure the organization around the point of service and to facilitate the formation and effectiveness of teams is indeed challenging work. No one is left unaddressed in these efforts to create new relationships and interactions. The demand is to understand the character of change and the emerging context for health care in a subscriber-based, price-capitated continuum of care.

The traditional, vertically integrated organizational design for health systems is quickly dissipating in importance and being replaced throughout by the construction of a horizontally linked service continuum that represents the range of stakeholders and providers who configure their efforts and relationships around the service population that reflects the community served by the health system.

PRINCIPLES FOR A NEW AGE

Moving into a new paradigm for health care means discerning the essential principles that underpin the purpose and meaning of health care. The principles that once characterized the age out of which we are moving are now diminishing and shifting to a new set of foundations upon which society is being transformed.