



High Reliability as a Way of Thinking: Where Infrastructure Meets Practice

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Accreditation and High Reliability Partners in Safe, High-Quality Care



Accreditation supports the implementation and maintenance of policies and practices associated with safe, high-quality care.



High reliability describes a state in which an organization consistently achieves safe, error-free outcomes in environments where failure could cause serious harm.



In an ideal state, they work **synergistically**...

High Reliability Framework

Anticipation:
“Stay out of trouble”

Containment:
“Get out of trouble”

Preoccupied
with Failure

Vigilant about
emerging safety
threats

Reluctance to
Simplify

Explore root
causes as a path
to improvement

Sensitivity to
Operations

Anomalies
recognized early
and isolated
quickly

Commit to
Resilience

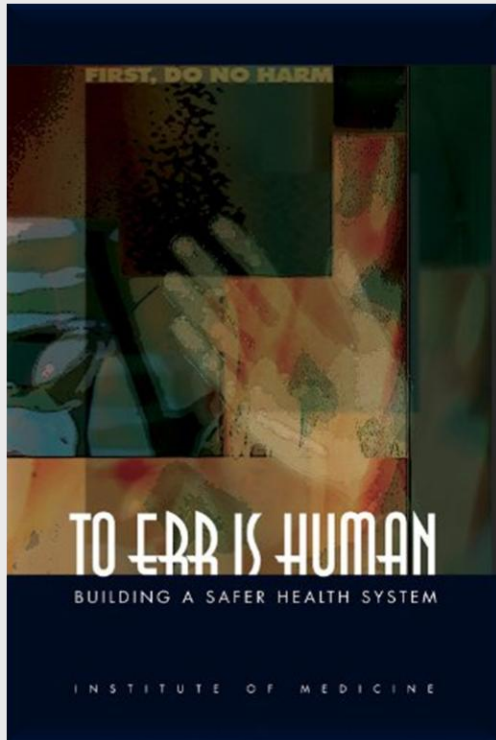
Recognize errors
quickly; diligent
about immediate
remediation

Deference to
Expertise

Push decision-
making to those
with the most
experience and
knowledge

Weick, K., Sutcliffe, K. (2015). *Managing the Unexpected: Sustained Performance in a Complex World*, 3rd Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

High Reliability in Healthcare



Institute of Medicine “To Err is Human” report in 1999:

- Up to 98,000 deaths in hospitals in the United States due to preventable medical errors.

Could high reliability principles be applied in healthcare to improve safety?

Challenges to High Reliability in Healthcare



Healthcare is organizationally fragmented

- Physicians, nurses, techs, administrators, and contractors—all with different training, allegiances, and professional cultures.
- Variation across units (ICU vs. OR vs. ambulatory), each with its own workflow.

Healthcare faces high levels of unpredictability and variability

- Every patient presents a huge variety of unknowns and variability in responses.

Teams in healthcare are fluid and continuously changing

It Can Be Done- With Impressive Results

Joint Commission International has been partnering with Singapore Ministry of Health on a journey towards high reliability across several healthcare facilities



Clinical Impact (2022–2024)

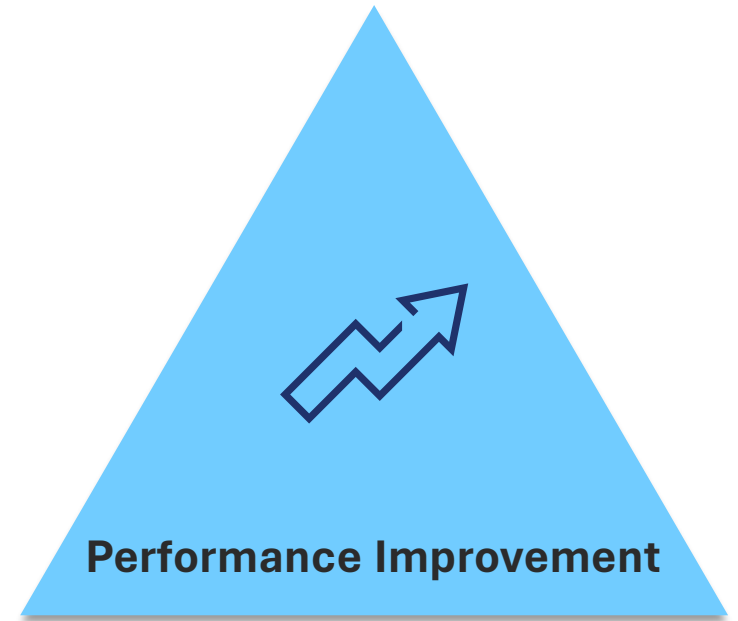
- **49%** decrease in medication complications
- **38%** decrease in falls
- **23%** overall reduction in Healthcare Associated Conditions



Safety Culture Improvements (2019–2024)

- **21%** improvement in communication openness
- **22%** rise in response to error reporting
- Improvements across **7** AHRQ Safety Culture domains

High Reliability Model for Healthcare: 3 Domains of Change



4 Phases of Maturity Toward High Reliability



Integrating High Reliability in Your Organization



Strategic Plan



**Quality Plan
Goals & Targets**



Dashboards



**Communication
Strategies**



Leadership Commitment



Safety Culture

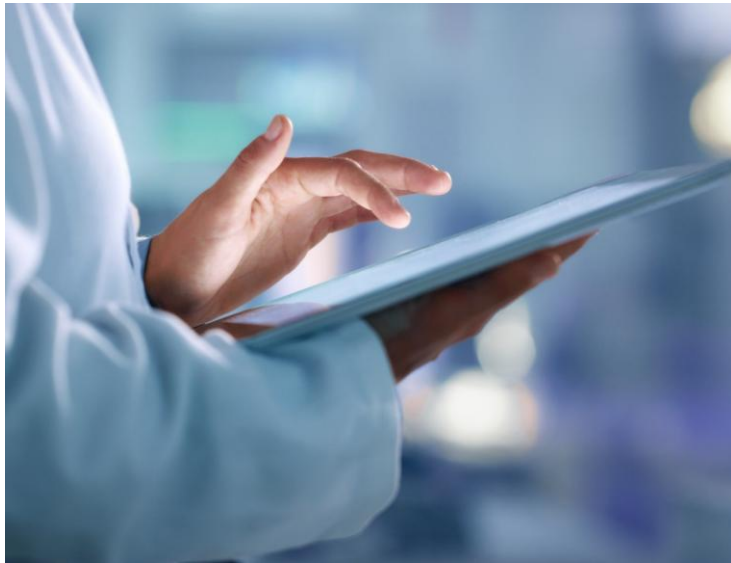


Performance Improvement

What Does This Practice Look Like?

Case In Point:

HARRISHEALTH



Harris Health is a safety net health system- one that serves a large population of uninsured and underinsured patients.

Two hospitals, 37 community clinics and provide care for ~10,000 detainees at local jail.

They began their High Reliability journey during their strategic planning process in 2020 in partnership with Joint Commission.

“Upon initiating the journey to HRO, it soon became evident that there is no standard way to become an HRO.”

Lin, K et al. Physician Leadership Journal. 2025;12(5):35-42

High Reliability Strategies and Tactics

Commitment to a culture of safety

Leadership rounding and education, starting with leadership (C-suite, board, department directors).

Implementation of continuous improvement process

Creation of quality improvement team to support efforts (training in performance improvement methodologies).

Development of standardized protocols and checklists

Integrated performance improvement resources into the electronic health record.

Establishment of effective communication channels

Tiered huddles to share and address issues, displays on key metrics, weekly updates.

Engagement of patients and families

Creation of a patient and family engagement committee. Use of patient and family feedback to improve discharge process, fall prevention etc.

Use of data-driven decision making

Regular audits to ensure compliance with policies and find opportunities to improve. Use of highly visible dashboards for shared accountability.

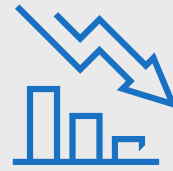
Impacts of The Harris Health High Reliability Journey



Nine-fold increase
in catches of “near-
miss” events



20% increase in
culture of safety
survey scores



**20-50+%
reductions** in
healthcare harms



Improved staff
engagement

Summary



High reliability is a mindset and daily practice, not an endpoint.



Accreditation and high reliability reinforce each other to drive safer care.



Progress depends on leadership, safety culture, and continuous improvement.



Applied well, high reliability principles lead to measurable reductions in harm and stronger outcomes.

Thank You

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