

## In Pursuit of Excellence— *Becoming Better at What We Do*

by **Russ Bodoff**

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For the past 30 years, our industry's relentless focus on safety, quality, and achieving the highest standards of patient care has been the driving force behind our field's success. I am proud of the safety record established by home and specialty infusion therapy providers and businesses—and proud of the commitment to quality that I see demonstrated every time I visit a NHIA member. Health care like this does not just happen. Rather, it is a direct result of hard work, an uncompromising devotion to patients, and a tenacious commitment to the pursuit of excellence. As we plan for the future and work to strengthen patient care, we must continue to work together to further enhance the long-term performance of our field.

Safety and excellence have never been more important, particularly in today's ever-changing health care environment—where we are being challenged to find new ways to provide high-quality care, while improving efficiency and reducing cost. This issue of *INFUSION* takes a look at how our industry is taking steps toward continuous improvement in these and other areas. Whether it involves embracing new ways of thinking to streamline processes and achieve operational efficiencies, adopting new quality standards that will improve patient safety, or engaging in professional development to strengthen technical competence, all of us must maintain focus on improving our processes, products, services, and overall performance.

Back in the mid-1980s, Motorola developed a process improvement methodology, Six Sigma, designed to help organizations optimize speed and agility, reduce costs, and improve quality. Adopted by companies such as General Electric, IBM, and the Mayo Clinic, this business excellence philosophy spread globally across all industries to achieve operational excellence and enable growth. I can still remember being in a meeting with then CEO of Motorola, George Fisher, when he was discussing quality. He talked about how excited people got when they would speak of reaching quality levels of 90-95%. "But," he would say "would you want to tell a patient that his new heart valve had a 5% failure rate?" George stressed the need to reach for 100% quality—emphasizing that, even if ultimate attainment might be elusive, having a mindset of pursuing excellence was what mattered most. Within our field, we have an obligation to do likewise. As such, I know you will find interesting two case studies of how Lean Six Sigma principles are being applied to pharmacy and intake departments at Johns Hopkins Home Care Group.

Also in this issue is a success story about new enteral connectors that will improve patient safety by reducing the incidence of misconnections. This initiative is an excellent example of manufacturers using evidence-based data collected in the field to come together and develop new engineering standards that will make these connectors much safer for users. Particularly exciting to me is that the new design standard came about through the consensus of volunteer experts from many different countries. Many people are not aware of the work of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which brings together representatives from around the world to work toward a common goal of product improvement and standardized approaches. It amazes me how successful the ISO has become when you compare it to other international organizations, like the United Nations, that has basically become radicalized without direction. We need to engage in even more processes and collaborations that yield success.

I wish there was a way that the cooperation achieved on a global scale between countries looking to support quality practices, like the connector standards, could be repeated domestically as health care issues are addressed between government agencies and the providers delivering the care. The ISO success is built on give and take, and developing a global consensus on issues. I think a little give and take here in the U.S. would go a long way toward resolving the issues that plague our health care system.

Yet, this should never hinder our pursuit of excellence. Continuous improvement is the path we all must take to advance our industry and successfully meet the changing needs of the patients we serve. It takes a genuine management commitment to investing in training, development of quality processes, and in instilling in every team member the recognition of the importance of quality in the work that they do. To this point, ongoing professional development provides us with the tools to think creatively, innovate, and embrace change—all key ingredients we need to advance our industry and better serve our patients.

I have said much about continuous quality improvement and pursuing excellence as it is indeed the path we must embark on to advance performance. But, at the end of the day, excellence is really all about becoming better at what we do—and I am proud to be a part of the home and specialty infusion therapy community, where the commitment to excellence is so high.

Regards,

