

The Transforming Standard in Healthcare

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“Goodness is the only investment which never fails.” Henry David Thoreau

Accrediting agencies set standards for good medical practice. These standards propose ethical attitudes and behaviors that, when achieved, reward patients with excellent care and employees with the resources necessary for good practice. Implied in the fulfillment of these standard is that all leaders, employees, and patients in the healing enterprise can expect that their dignity and rights are sacred and inalienable. The fullness of these rights is implied in the mission and value words professed by a healthcare system.

The standard of goodness is the most important and encompassing standard. It is the ability to instill a transforming culture in the organization. This means that the organization has a quality of good in its very fabric which is the literal meaning of goodness. This quality of good must be integrated into the mission which holds the value and virtue to assure a commitment of each person in the healthcare organization.

The mission must be expressed and practiced so that the culture will not be influenced by one trend or another. The goal of the mission is always to create a meaningful culture, one that has stability and not one that depends on the latest trends in business which is summarized in the mantra of “good to great.” The standard must be to develop a transforming quality as part of every aspect of the organization.

Great is a way of distinguishing one organization from another. It is basically part of the competitive language of healthcare as a competitive business. Good, on the other hand, is not meant to be competitive, but rather as a goal to reach. It is simply a quality of being.

Like all qualities, it can be described in a range of intensity. The highest is the ability to reach one’s own quality of being of integrity and take part in a transforming culture. This goes far beyond meeting national standards which is only the middle level the range. Standards were not meant to create competition, but to protect the patients, and professionals from being harmed.

Why have we made competition and business goals the only measure of the good in healthcare? It is regrettable that the word good has taken second place to what has become the word that signifies excellence. We have replaced the word goodness with greatness.

If an organization simply fulfills its mission and the values and virtues that are its base, the good (ness) will be achieved with little fanfare. It will grant each healthcare organization its own moral compass to extend service to all who are in need. This will create a transforming culture within the organization.

There are many national tools that assess the standards related to general patient and professional satisfaction. They are an employee engagement tool, and a patient satisfaction tool. Both provide a measurement of qualities found in the mission statement. Based on the outcomes of these tools, administrators can judge the commitment to the mission of the employees and the effect it has on the patients in their care. So, for example, if one of the mission goals is to heal, the engagement scores would say something about active connection vs. passive connection with the organization and with the baseline of care for patients. The higher the engagement suggests a high “active connection which is the practice of holistic and reciprocal medicine. This connection” is supported by the practice of compassion, kindness, and altruism with the patients and one another. As the active connection increases, healing increases, and patient satisfaction increases.

This suggests that if an organization sees a primary good in the quality of healing connections with patients, it will support the development of healing skills like empathy and compassion as well as the practice of character strengths within the category of humanity. Thus, there is a clear connection between the mission and the actual behaviors based on virtue and value intentions.

Thus, if there was less attention put on fulfilling a certain score on an engagement measure and more attention and examples of teaching the meaning of the mission intention, in this case healing, patients and employees would be more satisfied and fulfilled and the scores would change dramatically. There is considerable research to support this connection between mission understanding and virtue and character. Among the many research projects, the transforming of culture effect research from workplace spirituality is the most prominent. Of course, in a business dominated framework, this type of transformation is not considered important, but rather competition and compensation rewards are the tools used primarily to try to transform culture.

The Quality of Good in Healthcare

Reaching for the good in medicine demands a concentration on moral and ethical behavior. Indeed, the art of medicine and the science of medicine are expected to be supplementary and integrated into one another. The designation of a good practice implies the presence of basic degrees of and components of the following: competence, reliability, nobility, kindness, strength, moral rightness, desirability, and attractiveness. The highest understanding of the good in medicine, as in society is the integration of these components.

The quality of good is zealous, transcending thoughts and activities. It is the human characteristic that binds relationships together, brings hope in the face of despair, and enhances

the human spirit. Reaching the good is found in a culture where traditional virtues are accepted and practiced. empathy, compassion, integrity, justice and benevolence are the highest of priorities. The size or influence of a healthcare organization does not show that these qualities of the good are practiced widely. This has to do with the art of medicine, not the business of medicine. This has to do with organizations' attention to mission and values.

The development of the highest forms of the good is found in both the art and science of medicine. Both depend on the fostering of habits conducive to the development of character and the fulfillment of their mission. These habits are developed through the practice of virtues like courage, altruism, empathy, compassion, kindness, justice, and trustworthiness.

Goodness oriented healthcare depends on both the brilliance of science and the reciprocal healing fostered among caregivers, care-receivers, and leaders. Working together a healing culture is created in the enterprise where altruism abounds and develops into deeper levels of goodness.

Goodness as a Moral Experience

Goodness in medicine is fundamentally a moral attitude to be practiced. Administrators express goodness as a moral attitude by achieving results that help others while fulfilling goals. If they are driven for results which provide dedicated service to patients and providers, they and the organization will move from good to goodness, expressed in satisfaction scores and public reputation. To achieve this, they must lead with enthusiastic humility, selfless service, and a passion for healing. This is the best of servant leadership and result in reputation and imitation.

Goodness, experienced as compassion, hope, and trust, takes part in each interaction between employer and employee, caregiver and care-receiver. Goodness engages in each transaction and every meeting that a caregiver experience. Each illness goes with stories and meanings about the person who suffers from the illness.

Leaders express goodness when they concern themselves with the physical and spiritual well-being of caregivers, especially about emotional and physical limits, providing the care and resources necessary to thrive. Caregivers express goodness when they patiently and empathically listen to patients who challenge them with a mixture of their emotions, values, and relationships.

Goodness is realized in positive engagement and positive relationships. It is experienced in the listening to stories, emotions, ad meanings, in addition to physical descriptions. While technical information is exchanged about an illness, it is the emotional-moral exchange which demands primary attention to form a healing relationship. This reciprocal exchange is sometimes interrupted which separates the caregiver and the care-receiver from the experience from interactive goodness, a zealous activity in going beyond the good.

Caregiving is a moral experience because it offers what is the highest good for the other, a mutual exchange. The practice of medicine has a moral core wherein caregivers want to be

compassionate, useful and responsible. This is done in the face of burdensome rules of business, institutional audits, and the personal demands on the professional and private time of the caregiver.

A goodness-oriented caregiver always includes the patient's moral and physical experience in making a diagnosis and treating the disease. In the end, healing is the highest form of reciprocal exchange because it is a moral experience with goodness as the intention. As a result, the goals of goodness have many outcomes in the healing relationship. All of these can mitigate against the presence of burnout and support the presence of powerful reciprocal relationships in medicine for both.

The practice of medicine is a moral experience with goodness as its highest expression. Why do we not use the word goodness as a motivator and as a standard to be achieved? It is a word that summarizes metrics of medicine. It speaks to the culture in healthcare.

Corporate Culture and Goodness in Healthcare

The medical corporate culture stems from fundamental ethical values and behaviors provided by leaders that affect employees' and patients' behaviors. The culture is developed by a pattern of shared foundational assumptions that the organization holds. For example, the culture is described in the goals of healing, serving, educating, innovating, and leading. These are complemented with corresponding values of compassion, benevolence, excellence, integrity and teamwork.

A healthcare system more than fulfills the standard of goodness when its corresponding mission and value concepts are taken seriously and made flesh in all major decisions and programs. Medical leaders who developed a goodness culture, develop a moral culture. Goodness then influences all thinking, decisions and behavior. This organization becomes to be known as a "virtuous organization." Physicians and all providers are drawn to this culture and become engaged in its mission.

An organization's culture and virtue ethics are inextricably linked. Ethical leadership rests on three pillars: the leadership's moral character, the ethical legitimacy of its vision and values, and the morality of the choices and actions that leaders engage in and collectively pursue. It the focus is on a trust culture by the leadership, a work culture that fosters trust values are a priority where there is a shared governance and team building. If the leadership also includes a spiritual dimension, the focus is on building commitment, promoting stewardship and modeling service. This type of leadership tries to develop a culture of goodness by setting, teaching and enforcing the connection between mission and values. With this type of holistic leadership, trust is the hallmark of the organization's goodness.

Goodness as the Standard

The qualities of a workplace steeped in the standard of goodness stand out from all others. The first quality is that employees have a spirited identity. Their engagement is not

artificially imposed but comes from their inner desire to fulfill the mandate of dedicated service. The employees experience purpose and meaning because of their work. They and the people affected by their work experience a sense of connectedness to one another and the workplace community. As a result, employees desire to find wholeness in the face of fragmentation, community in the face of isolation and loneliness, meaning in life in the face of meaninglessness, values and virtues that endure in the face of what is temporary and a liberating sense of what is important in life.

This is a workplace spirit where goodness is the standard as measured by scores of employee engagement and care-receivers satisfaction. Goodness then is zealous activity reaching for the highest forms of good in the workplace and in society. Goodness scores ultimate measures levels of peace, patience, kindness, and joy which in turn transform everything that medicine does for others. These are the ingredients for a fulfilled workplace and satisfied recipients of service.

Regrettably, the standard of dedicated service and the fulfillment of values have been challenged in today's healthcare workplace. Because of outside pressures like cost of care, reimbursements, ethical challenges for both providers and patients, the inclusion of goodness as a practice and attitude is challenged in modern healthcare. If these challenges continue and becomes the predominant mindset for the provision of care, the greatness of healthcare will be compromised because less stress is placed upon the values in healthcare. The practice of goodness in healthcare creates a workplace filled with a generous spirit which supports the values of meaning, purpose, and connection. Without goodness greatness cannot be achieve and then preserved as a cultural experience.

There are multiple benefits of embracing goodness as a standard of care and a foundation of operations. Among them are building trust, stressing healing relationships, evoking compassion, cultivating leadership, supporting meaning and purpose, increasing positive outcomes, and motivating leadership.

1. Trust

A trusting relationship is indispensable in healthcare. Generally, both providers and patients seek to find goodness in the healthcare experience in the form of values such as trust, loyalty, compassion, integrity and benevolence. Employees want to belong to a healthcare organization where they can experience meaning and connectivity and a place to express individual talent based on a spirituality of work. The ideal situation is to be able to match their values with the values of the organization. In a comparable way, patients want their values to be acknowledged in addition to receiving excellent clinical care. In other words, patients don't come only for what the organization does, but also "why" it does it. They come because they want to trust and be trusted. As a result, organizations must consider important questions such as: Are our business practices based on goodness? Do we promote organizational values and live the

values we promote? Are our caregivers affording the time to create healing relationships that include the meaning of illness as well as the diagnosis and treatment of disease?

An acknowledgement of patients' values is imperative for a successful healing experience. This is so important because when patients are sick, their sense of self expands, and self-protection also extends to their children and their family. Personal values gain importance, sometimes even over life. For them, the stakes are high. People need to know they can trust their individual providers and the organization where the care is provided. The healthcare environment should build trust and not mistrust.

2. Healing Relationships

Patients expect that their healthcare providers will be value-based with altruistic intentions beyond any doubt. They want to find good outcomes in the face of their pain and insecurity. They want to be treated in a healthcare organization that acknowledges their values and personhood which extends even to their spiritual lives as a resource for healing of mind and body. Often patients come when they are sick and anxious. They come because they are affected by life changing moments. They come to seek an experience with healers who have goodness and are willing to be involved in a healing relationship.

3. Compassionate Care

Compassion emanates from the goodness found in the culture that individuals absorb and construct into building character. Character is developed through the habitual development and practice of virtues which become part of character over a lifetime. In turn, this goodness evokes a natural connection between culture and individuals.

The exercise of goodness is a silent expectation in the culture of all healthcare organizations. When patients seek compassionate care from their providers, it is an expectation based on goodness. Goodness is equated with a well-developed moral character and becomes an expectation in society. People are expected to be compassionate, empathic, generous, honest, courageous, temperate, just, and altruistic. These virtues are internal strengths that must be part of the training for physicians and all involved in healthcare.

While empathy is the driving force that helps people to want to help others, compassion extends outwardly from individuals and connects to action. When that bond of compassion is formed, it reduces anxiety, fear and pain. Whether or not compassion is achieved by extending a helping hand or by receiving that hand, both parties are confirmed and feel loved in the creation of that bond. In the hospital setting compassion and goodness must be cultivated by leadership so it can seep out into the environment where caregivers work and grow.

4. Judicious Leadership

The intentional practice of goodness creates a healthy workplace spirit which is informed and energized by the mission and values of the healthcare organization. The intentional and

judicious practice of goodness eventually leads to positive behaviors and healthy interactions throughout the workplace and healing outcomes for patients. The development and maintenance of workplace spirit health is a major responsibility of leaders in healthcare. When these qualities of goodness are operationalized in the workplace all are affected in a positive sense. All employees develop a spiritual identity; all experience purpose and meaning in work; all experience a sense of connectedness; and, finally, all are engaged in the performance of healing. Leaders must purposefully develop these qualities in the workplace.

Since there is so much exposure to physical and psychological trauma at the level of patient care, goodness must be emphasized in all decision made by providers and then which eventually is transferred to patients. Because of advancements in accountability, caregivers cannot look the other way and ignore trauma existing before them. They cannot ignore the whole person. Caregivers need time to process trauma mentally to regenerate their goodness. They need to break out of natural repetitive circles of thought and negative patterns of behavior which are the result of chronic stress caused often in the regular course of treatment, but, moreover, because of the productivity pressures. If they are pressed with the needs solely of administrators, they lose their awareness of patients' human needs. In turn they lose awareness of their own needs. They burnout physically and mentally and eventually, without treatment, leave the organization and the profession. Character and virtue development serve remedies for burnout.

5. Goodness Supports Human and Transcendent Values: Meaning and Purpose

A healthcare system's ability to keep a competitive advantage may be a function of its ability to encourage goodness in terms of interconnectedness and meaning among its employees and patients. By stressing goodness in the workplace, meaning and purpose are highlighted which can transform cultural challenges into ripe opportunities for building a truly engaged and inclusive workforce.

A new field of research called *Workplace Spirit or Workplace Spirituality* has developed. It tries to measure the goodness found in a healthy workplace. The values found in goodness take time to develop and they require constant attention. The strengths of a good character, human excellence and transcendent values, are ideals that all strive after. But whatever goodness the healthcare system proclaims outwardly must also be real and palpable to the patients within its walls and to the employees. Patients want to see providers taking the time to be with them in their time of need. The patients must experience goodness firsthand, no matter the simplicity or severity of the interaction.

6. Goodness Insures Positive Outcomes

In healthcare, success is measured in terms of metrics. Various aspects of goodness can be measured in metrics. For example, engagement metrics tries to measure the interconnection of employees in a workplace. Engaged individuals are psychologically present, attentive,

connected, integrated and focused on their role performances. They are open to themselves and others, connected to work and others and bring their complete selves to work.

The recent workplace spirit research brings a broad-based measure of the workplace spirit. This metric is a combination of scales measuring meaning, sense of community, alignment of values and the valued life. In a word, it is a measure of commitment, job satisfaction and emotional involvement. The measure of goodness is much more than a measure of engagement and monetary or functional success.

In a broad-based health system, the level of goodness, as measured by the positive effects of mutual reciprocity in healing relationships, should be the most important metric of success. This measure of goodness is shown in peoples' lives in the form of reduced pain and suffering, in decreased patients' fears, in increasing patient's happiness, in improving morbidity and mortality rates, fewer instances of burnout and exhaustion in caregivers and a stable health staff.

In the end, the deliberate practice of goodness will increase loyalty and engagement, improve both patient and provider satisfaction, reduce unnecessary readmissions and lengths of stay, as well, as making the healthcare system trusted by the community served. Indeed, all measures of healthcare safety will be increased because each member cares about the health of each patient.

The awareness of goodness is an expression of living in a healing community because the compassion created will extend outward into neighborhoods and the world health community. A clear path toward the acknowledgement of the benefits of the practice of goodness is to reduce employee stress so they can cultivate their natural empathy and compassion and spend more time with their patients. The practice of goodness also holds administrators accountable to keep the mission and values they project publicly. Indeed, the ultimate reward will be for all who succeed in cultivating goodness in the workplace.

Conclusion

Healthcare is a caregiving service with its foundations in goodness. Attention to the practice of goodness is a human commitment for the betterment of all involved in the healing process. Moreover, leaders in healthcare create value in an organization when they listen and create ways to live with virtues and values as meaningful guides. The practice of goodness is the ultimate guide, investment, and outcome in healthcare.

