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# WHAT IS THE LEARNING CURVE TO IMPLEMENTING A JUST CULTURE?

# Making Just Culture a Reality: One Organization's Approach

- Perspective
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- Implementing Policies that Support Just Culture
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- Background
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# Perspective

We've all been there...something goes wrong, a patient is harmed, and we, as medical directors, managers, and administrators, are forced to judge the behavioral choices of another human being. Most of the time, we conduct this complex leadership function guided by little more than vague policies, personal beliefs, and intuition. Frequently, we are frustrated by the fact that many other providers have made the same mistake or behavioral choice, with no adverse outcome to the patient, and the behavior was overlooked.

# RAISING AWARENESS

Building awareness is the first step in any movement.
To raise awareness we did two things.

Conduct a survey of staff, medical leaders, managers,
and administrators asking them various questions about
how they thought the organization would respond to a
given behavior by a clinician (e.g., bringing
unauthorized equipment into the operating room [OR]
for use in a surgery) if that behavior resulted in harm,
then asked the same question, except this time the
behavior resulted in no harm.

# Implementing Policies that Support Just Culture

- This might better be termed, "eliminate the policies that don't allow you to incorporate just culture." Policies that require punishment for errors, for example, won't work. Sentinel event investigation policies that say, "We will only look at systems and not human behavior" won't work. Ideally, the organizational policies related to employee behavior expectations, consequences for behavior, and event investigation would incorporate the language of just culture. Job descriptions, medical staff bylaws, and codes of conduct should incorporate the principles. .

# Building Just Culture into Organizational

Once the leadership group of the organization has grasped the concept and leaders buy in to the philosophy, you can begin to incorporate it into the work you do every day. I recommend not introducing just culture as a new initiative or it could become the "flavor of the month." Instead, leaders should look at the challenges they face and ask, "How would I apply just culture principles to this situation?"

If your organization's priority is reducing harm related to misidentification of patients, for example, how would you work with the staff to understand and categorize behavioral choices as "error," "at-risk," or "reckless"? How would you clarify what the organizational response will be to each type of behavior? If a person makes an error, he/she knew the right thing to do, intended to do the right thing, and followed the right process, but made a mistake (e.g., misreads a label); he/she should be consoled and we should figure out a system that will prevent future errors.

# Background

The framework of a just culture ensures balanced accountability for both individuals and the organization responsible for designing and improving systems in the workplace. Engineering principles and human factors analysis influence the design of these systems so they are safe and reliable.

# Methods

Approaches for improving patient safety introduced here are (1) analysis of error, (2) specific tools to enhance safety, and (3) outcome engineering.

# Conclusion

The just culture is a learning culture that is constantly improving and oriented toward patient safety.

- REFERENCE

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