Chapter 4
Preparing the Right Physicians to be Exceptional Leaders in the 21st Century: How to Maximize Their Success Most Cost-Effectively and Efficiently

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes evidence-based strategies found to most effectively maximize the Return On Investment (ROI) of physicians’ formal leadership training programs. Recognizing that no two prospective physician leaders are exactly the same, formal leadership training programs cannot be most effective if these do not allow for organizational and situational differences as well as critical differences among physicians’ demonstrated personalities and leadership styles. When selecting prospective physician leaders, the authors advocate for an individualized process which requires “Diagnosis Before Treatment,” “Three Dimensional Screening,” and the application of “More Effective Alternative Strategies” in order to avoid committing the “12 Deadly Sins.”

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter’s authors recognize the significant potential value of providing physicians with formal leadership training in cohort forums, educating them about value-based decision making and alternative healthcare delivery models, and how graduates of such well-designed programs contribute to an organization’s learning climates. Clearly, the training content and milieu must be designed and delivered with due consideration for the desired outcomes; their diverse and related experiences indicate that leadership and teamwork training will enhance the skills of some, but not all, physicians. Even those with appropriate skills can be confused by the lack of clarity of a typical job description. Current realities and resource constraints demand that health care systems judiciously invest their limited resources in those physicians who will generate the best returns on investment and who will benefit key stakeholders the most. What should be screened for in prospective physician leadership development program participants must be based on the same attributes required of all successful physician leaders and senior executives.

This chapter identifies some critical, yet often overlooked, elements that warrant serious consideration to generate optimal results for everyone involved. It is anticipated that taking a guided “step back” to understand the factors affecting successful selection and placement of physician leaders will help broaden perspectives while simultaneously enhancing focus on those critical factors that significantly impact the ultimate success of physician leadership cohort training forums.

THE CHALLENGE

Effective physician leadership is more critical than ever before for hospitals as well as for health systems, clinics, clinically integrated networks, and others. A physician leader on the senior team, who demonstrates both an innate understanding of the care process and the provider’s role in that process, has proven to be key to accomplishing goals. Capital decisions, service line management and supply chain management are just a few examples in which the roles of Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Medical Director, Vice President of Medical Affairs (VPMA) and service line lead brought value to many organizations. However, problems in selecting those key contributors are frequent, predictable and yet, avoidable.

Gordon L. Alexander, Jr., MD, former chief executive officer (CEO) of the University of Minnesota Medical Center and University of Minnesota Children’s Hospital, notes that physicians frequently enter their health care administration roles without the benefit of years of experience managing aspects of a complex organization. While clinical experience is valuable, it does not always translate to
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