



Topic Disposition Summary: High Reliability Organization Publication Update

Date: 7/26/2024

Nomination Number: 1079

Purpose: This document summarizes the information addressing a nomination submitted on February 20, 2024, ([link to EHC posted topic nomination](#)) through the Effective Health Care Website. This information was used to inform the Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC) Program decisions about whether to produce an evidence report on the topic, and if so, what type of evidence report would be most suitable.

Issue: The nominator is interested in updating the review on high-reliability organizations (HRO) and the additional focus of outpatient care in the review.

Findings: The EPC Program will not develop a new systematic review because we did not find enough recent primary studies addressing the concerns of this nomination.

Background:

High-reliability organizations (HROs) are organizations that consistently operate safely and efficiently in complex, high-risk environments. HROs are characterized by their ability to maintain exceptional performance despite facing challenging and unpredictable situations. These organizations embrace five key principles: 1) Deference to expertise, valuing input from frontline subject matter experts; 2) Sensitivity to operations, maintaining a detailed understanding of current processes and how they intersect; 3) Preoccupation with preventing failure, proactively working to anticipate and resolve potential issues; 4) Reluctance to simplify, seeking to thoroughly understand the root causes of problems; and 5) Promotion of resilience, detecting and containing errors effectively.¹

In the healthcare industry, adopting HRO principles has become increasingly important as organizations strive to improve patient safety and quality of care. Healthcare organizations implementing HRO initiatives have reported a 55%–100% reduction in serious safety events.¹ Establishing an HRO culture promotes psychological safety for identifying issues, improves efficiency, makes employees feel heard and appreciated, and maintains a reputation for excellent care. This requires aligning science, informatics, incentives, and culture toward continuous improvement in a learning health care system.² To develop and express HRO principles, healthcare organizations can utilize a number of formal improvement tools such as communication frameworks, Plan-Do-Study-Adjust (PDSA) cycles, root cause analysis, and Lean Six Sigma methodologies.³ These tools enable organizations to systematically identify areas for improvement, implement changes, and evaluate outcomes. Regular reporting of quality and safety measures to leadership ensures that the entire organization remains focused on improving processes and outcomes.⁴⁻⁵ A learning, improving system is resilient in the face of crises and can continue providing outstanding care even under difficult circumstances.⁶⁻⁷ HRO

principles promote the highest levels of safety, quality, and reliability, and can result in better patient outcomes, avoided harm, and an improved care experience.

Related Resources:

We identified additional information in the course of our assessment that might be useful.

- Information: *High Reliability Organization Toolkit* - MHA. (2021, January 18). MHA. <https://web.mhanet.com/media-library/high-reliability-organization-toolkit/>
- *High-reliability organizations: Technology drives care delivery and workforce training*. (2022, August 6). <https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/expert-insights/high-reliability-organizations-technology-drives-care-delivery-and-workforce-training>
- *High reliability*. (n.d.). Joint Commission Resources. <https://www.jcrinc.com/what-we-offer/high-reliability/>

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Conflict of Interest: None of the investigators have any affiliations or financial involvement that conflicts with the material presented in this report.

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