

# Getting Boards On Board

## October 19, 2007

The Department of Health Policy worked with Premier | Care Science to develop a leadership conference specifically for those involved in hospital governance. "Getting Boards on Board: Leadership Strategies for Quality and Performance Improvement," was held in Philadelphia on October 19th and attracted 105 attendees from throughout the US. Presentations by seven noted authorities and a discussion moderated by David B. Nash stimulated the audience to consider new approaches to the challenges regarding quality.

Stephanie Alexander, MBA, Senior Vice President and General Manager of Healthcare Informatics at Premier Inc., delivered the welcome address and provided insights from the CMS / Premier Pay-for-Performance (P4P) demonstration and extension and the National Leadership Survey regarding "top quality performers" and characteristics of boards, medical staffs, and senior executives which drive such performance.

David B. Nash, MD, MBA, Chair of the Department of Health Policy at Jefferson Medical College, provided an engaging presentation on "Leadership for Quality and Safety: The Role of the Board," reviewing statistics, his professional and personal experiences, and other case studies to show trends and challenges in hospital quality and safety; also highlighting board-level structure and process changes needed for boards to succeed in overseeing quality.

Blair L. Sadler, JD, Senior Fellow at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and Vice Chair of the Center for Health Design, discussed "Why Building Better Hospitals Will Reduce Harm, Increase Joy in Work, and Save Money," presenting research evidence and case examples on improved clinical outcomes, patient satisfaction, and staff recruitment and retention and thus making a strong business case for using evidence-based design to "build better hospitals."

John R. Combes, MD, President and Chief Operating Officer of the Center for Healthcare Governance, presented "A Critical Accountability: The Board's Role in Quality" and reviewed calls to action by the National Quality Forum, Moody's and Fitch's, and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and findings from the DELMARVA survey and presented a typology of board accountabilities.

During lunch Richard A. Bankowitz, MD, MBA, FACP, Vice President and Medical Director for Healthcare Informatics, and Eugene Kroch, PhD, Vice President and Chief Scientist, both at Premier, presented the Premier | Care Science Select Practice Awards to the top 49 hospitals selected for superior clinical outcomes and exceptional efficiency.

Following lunch, three speakers reviewed their experiences in quality and performance improvement:

“Cooper Health System: A Case of Change and Opportunity” was presented by Christopher Olivia, MD, its President and CEO;

“The Pursuit of Excellence: The Role of the System Board in a 20 Hospital Organization,” was reviewed by John Hensing, MD, Senior Vice President for Care Management and Quality at Banner Health; and

Marlon L. Priest, MD, Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer at the Bon Secours Health System, proposed “Getting Board Members to Ask: “Doctor, Why Do You Do it That Way?”

To consolidate all of the ideas and experiences presented during the day-long conference, David Nash moderated a concluding discussion, highlighting the changing risks and rewards facing healthcare organizations, the changing accountabilities of boards, and the changing competencies required to meet these challenges. The key take-home message from this conference is this: Ultimately, the board bears the financial responsibility for quality and safety—not the medical staff or hospital leadership.