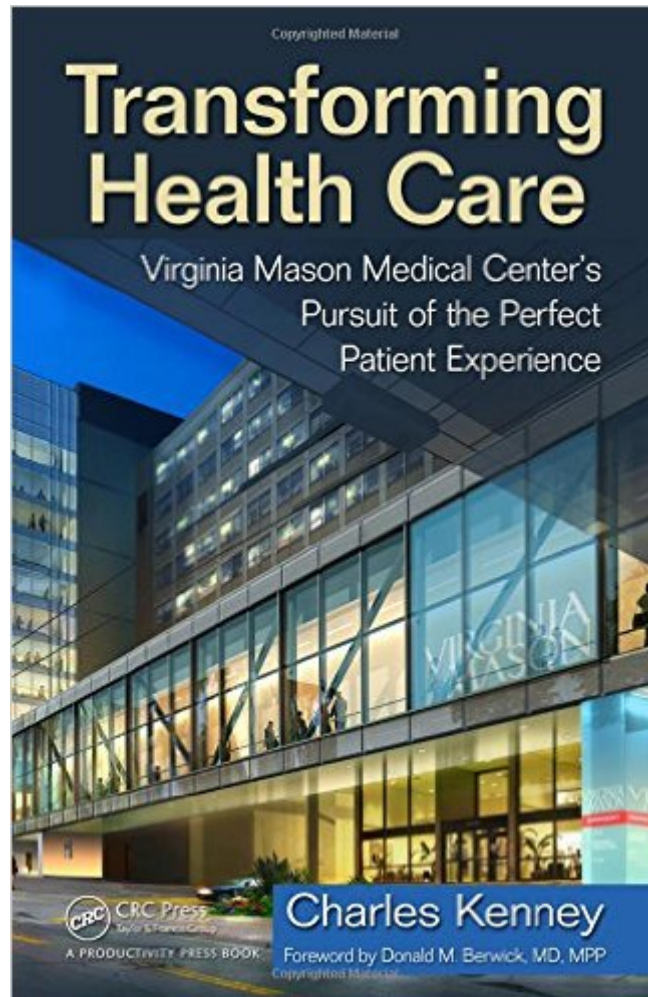


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# Transforming Health Care: Virginia Mason Medical Center's Pursuit Of The Perfect Patient Experience



## Synopsis

For decades, the manufacturing industry has employed the Toyota Production System – the most powerful production method in the world – to reduce waste, improve quality, reduce defects and increase worker productivity. In 2001, Virginia Mason Medical Center, an integrated healthcare delivery system in Seattle, Washington set out to achieve its compelling vision to become The Quality Leader and to fulfill that vision, adopted the Toyota Production System as its management method. Winner of a Shingo Research and Professional Publication Award! Transforming Health Care: Virginia Mason Medical Center's Pursuit of the Perfect Patient Experience takes you on the journey of Virginia Mason Medical Center's pursuit of the perfect patient experience through the application of lean principles, tools, and methodology. The results speak for themselves, including: An innovative patient safety alert system Reduction in professional liability insurance expenses Foundational changes that make it possible for nurses to spend 90% of their time with patients A computerized module that sorts through electronic medical charts and automatically identifies when disease management and preventative testing due Over the last several years Virginia Mason has become internationally known for its journey towards perfection by applying the Toyota Production System to healthcare. The book takes readers step by step through Virginia Mason's journey as it seeks to provide perfection to its customer – the patient. This book shows you how you use this system to transform your own organization.

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## Customer Reviews

The more you know about lean transformation the more you'll envy the Virginia Mason Medical Center (VMMC) for having the right people in the right places at the right times. At the end of the 1990s VMMC faced a struggle for survival as an in-the-black, separate entity. The CEO, Gary Kaplan, an MD and highly regarded executive saw the need for dramatic action and found it, after energetic searching, in Toyota Way thinking and acting. He created and nurtured the informed consent of the board of directors and, through John Black, engaged the Japanese consulting firm Shingijutsu. The executive team joined in embracing what became known as the Virginia Mason Production System (VMPS) and, with the clinical staff, hammered out the Virginia Mason Medical Center Physician Compact, the basis for concordant action in the VMPS. What's really to envy is the constancy of purpose that VMMC has maintained: when transformation efforts flagged or failed or worse - and they did, regularly - execs and docs, with board support, doubled-down and solved the problems. Each time that happened momentum increased: physicians saw better outcomes and less wasted effort, patients had better experiences, nurses spent more time actually helping patients, payers got to spend money where it mattered more, medical errors (and malpractice insurance cost) dropped dramatically, the list goes on and on, each recovered success synergizing more successes. As Donald Berwick points out in his Foreword, VMMC isn't perfect yet but, crucially, improvement continues apace: the board of directors, unified behind the VMPS, is chaired by Carolyn Corvi (the Boeing exec who, with Shingijutsu guidance, made the moving line in 737 final assembly happen), executives have become sophisticated in lean system dynamics, clinical staff are well aligned with the VMPS, and VMMC runs significantly in the black. Now all VMMC needs is a rational system of health care payment in which outcomes are rewarded instead of procedure delivery. The author, Charles Kenney, has produced a highly readable book with plenty of rich, authentic-seeming detail. I am a fast reader somewhat familiar with the sorts of issues addressed in the book, yet despite this being a relatively short book Kenney presents so much to think about that the pleasure of reading the book lasted much longer than anticipated.

A good chronicling of Virginia Mason's journey to lean. It illustrates the long and involved history of initial inspiration, learning and the trials and tribulations of converting processes and organizational culture. For those thinking this is an easy course to take, or that it is simply the latest in corporate fads, the case of Virginia Mason will show them otherwise. The shortcomings of the book, to me anyway, is that it is mostly about the challenge and achievements of organizational change. It was fairly light on what aspects of lean/six sigma worked. I would have liked to read more about specific tools (e.g., VSM, 5 S, heijunka, kanban) and their use. Where were they successful, where did it

take several tries, how can we readers learn from your experience. These are mentioned here and there, but insufficiently to help the rest of us in our own journeys. It is a useful tool for upper management. They may not be interested in the getting into the weeds. but they are interested in the time and devotion it took to change the organization.

"Transforming Health Care: Virginia Mason Medical Center's Pursuit of the Perfect Patient Experience" is an important read on the path to healthcare sustainability, increasing quality while decreasing cost, and understanding hospitals today. VMMC pioneered using LEAN (Toyota's system) in the healthcare space and remains an outstanding case study of how to do it. Transforming Health Care is an inside look into VMMC. Easy to read this fairly short book offers great insight, examples, and solutions for many of the vexing problems of changing from a fragmented highly error prone system to a "self-learning" organization. The more you know about LEAN principles the more you will get out of this book, however knowing LEAN isn't a prerequisite. Transforming Health Care is a road-map, a primer, a great case study on how to bring LEAN into your hospital or medical practice.

"If it was easy, anybody could do it..." The story of the "pursuit of the perfect patient experience" by the people of VMMC is truly an inspiration that calls each of us again to the pursuit of excellence in our leadership and service in health care. This well-written story provides us information for our heads and inspiration for our hearts. It shows us with a substantial real-world example that we can do profoundly better when we wholeheartedly pursue excellence in patient-focused care in a committed, collaborative and creative manner. The ongoing story of the pursuit of extraordinary service to people by the people of VMMC is compelling evidence that although it is not easy, it is the right thing to do, and we can do it, too. "It is the stories we tell others and the stories we tell ourselves that determine the quality of our lives." This is a story worth reading, worth telling, and worth living.

I was working at Virginia Mason when they started this whole lean process so was very into the stories they told. Bravo to them for baring their mistakes and what they have learned to the world. Great facility with great leaders!

I've read all the classic Lean books but nothing compares to this. It's written from the perspective of Dr. Kaplan and his leadership team and they share not only the success stories but the hard

lessons learned on their journey to Lean. If you're a Lean practitioner, don't get put off by the fact that VM is in health care. This book applies across all industries.

An inspiring, well written book -- should be on the must-read list for anyone in healthcare today. I had the privilege of meeting the author at an IHI event, and was moved by his passion for this area. An important insight into how systems can make changes towards higher quality healthcare in the US.

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