

The importance of the patient experience

JULY 23, 2019 [LINDEE DAVID](#)



Recently, I had the good fortune to meet Dr. Duncan Rozario, Chief of Surgery at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital. It was one of those easy conversations that takes on a life of its own, sparked by a shared leaning and fueled by a common vision.

When I got back to the office, I could not stop talking about our conversation. For both personal and professional reasons, I advocate for a patient-centered approach to health care. What Dr. Rozario stressed was the difference between patient care and patient experience. As soon as he mentioned the Cleveland Clinic, I recalled an [HBR](#) article I had read. Our conversation drove home how important it is to

distinguish between patient care (e.g., the execution of the medical procedure) vs. patient experience (i.e. everything from organizational culture, aesthetics to compassion and courteous treatment).

His point was this: everyone involved in caregiving must understand both their function and purpose. This is because a patient's perception of the quality of their care is highly influenced by their experience. As he says, yes, patients want physicians and health care teams to perform procedures well, but that is often not relatable for the patient—they don't see the elegant surgical procedure. What is relatable is the respect they receive and the connection they make with the people treating them. Further, Dr. Rozario mentioned that more and more studies show that patient attitudes influence their health outcomes. This means that the function of health care teams is only part of the success—delivering on the purpose is the other part. It also means that inherently, patients make up part of those teams.

Dr. Rozario is like so many physicians I have met—down to earth, committed, creative and above all, a good person. While making the case that focusing on the patient experience is a win-win for patients and hospitals—reducing medical costs and driving efficiency—his main point is that it's the right thing to do.

The shift to a patient-centric approach to health care is a big one. For care providers, to some degree it means a loss of autonomy and more complexity—the more perspectives in the mix, the greater the opportunity for competing interests. However, as we get better at this and begin to leverage the success of organizations like

Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, there are huge benefits for everyone—better outcomes, lower costs and greater efficiency.

For more information about Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital's efforts to improve the patient experience, read this recent article by Dr. Rozario in the [Canadian Journal of Surgery](#).

About the author



Lindee is the proud Chief Executive Officer of Joule. She is a strategic, innovative senior executive who has made a career of driving change within the health care system. Her vision is to create a movement of physician-led innovation that will result in health care improvements for physicians and their patients.