

# AI Practitioner

The international newsletter of AI best practice

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## Positive Change in Health Care

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Working in healthcare today can be either very exciting or very treacherous, depending on your perspective. Esteemed management author and guru Peter Drucker calls healthcare the "most difficult, chaotic, and complex" industry to manage today. Leaders face a myriad of challenges including: changing funding structures and requirements, new privacy regulations, increasing customer expectations, culture and morale issues, taxing workloads, 24/7 schedules, changing technology, high levels of competition and merger dynamics — and if these are not enough, a growing crisis due to a shortage of nurses. Healthcare as an industry is in great transition, and no one, not even currently popular healthcare futurists, know quite where it is headed.

Now, more than ever, healthcare organizations need new and creative ways to invent and implement business changes while effectively engaging people in the process. Considering current financial challenges and leadership priorities, new approaches and solutions must be *practical* as well as creative. Recent successes show that Appreciative Inquiry can be both an innovative and practical approach for organizations to access new solutions and create positive futures.

The unique characteristics of healthcare organizations, such as the interdependence among physicians, employees and departments, also make the implementation of change more difficult. Our experience is that most change efforts in healthcare fail, not because of poor strategy, but because of faulty implementation - brought on by outmoded approaches to change - often resulting in indifference, misunderstanding and anger. We have found that the reliable way to make change happen is for people from all of these groups to come together. When they are in the same room, they use their unique knowledge and wisdom to help source and drive change. Appreciative Inquiry is a powerful and practical way to make that happen.

We have also found there are several approaches that work well in combination with Appreciative Inquiry in the healthcare setting. In this Issue, the Whole-Scale Change Process and Rapid Cycle Process Redesign methods have been used with AI to deliver financial turnarounds. Complex Responsive Process and AI were used together to highlight patterns of relating which was a key part of starting a major

initiative on Relationship Centered Care.

Also in this Issue, change initiatives have selected ways to engage people according to their culture such as asking Information Systems (IS) teams to bring together information online, while other groups prefer face to face interviews in the same room others cascade interviews through an organization. Examples show that people with different personality types prefer different parts of the 4D cycle. Measurement is a major part of healthcare culture whether it is the National Health Service in the United Kingdom or private healthcare systems in the United States. We have found that building this into the change initiative is very important for *all* stakeholders. Showing customer satisfaction results going from 44% to nearly 53% in a year is a very powerful way of showing the measurement and engagement cultures.

This month's *AI Practitioner* offers a wide range of success stories using AI to facilitate change and create positive futures in various contexts and healthcare settings.

The first essay, *The Customer Factor: Excellence and Beyond Using Appreciative Inquiry to Improve Customer Service In a Hospital Wide Customer Service Initiative*, by Ed Groody, describes how Appreciative Inquiry was used to facilitate a highly successful hospital-wide customer service initiative and financial turnaround. In the next essay, *Community Development: Creating a Collaborative Community Solution for Mental Health*, Paula Comunelli provides an inspiring story of a local community using AI to unite and integrate multiple efforts in providing mental health services and overcome various funding and other challenges. Lolma Olsen in *Improving Nurse-Physician Communication* shares how AI can be a highly effective method for improving physician-nurse relationships.

Ron Bremer in *Using Appreciative Inquiry In A Technology Group "AI Roundup: No Bull!"* describes ground-breaking work using AI in the information technology (IT) area of healthcare. In *Changing the Culture of a Medical School Using Appreciative Inquiry and an Emergent Process*, Penny Williamson and Anthony Suchman describe progress thus far in a large-scale culture change initiative in an academic medical setting. Guy Spencer, *Appreciative Inquiry: A New Approach for Qualitative Market Research in Healthcare*, shows how AI is now being used to more effectively conduct health care research with physicians resulting in reduced costs and improved clinical results.

Four shorter articles by Alastair Baker and Margaret Wright (*Using AI To Initiate Stakeholder Interactions In Healthcare*), Colette Herrick (*At the Intersection of Practice and Education: Developing a Powerful Nursing Alliance*), Jill Turner (*Cancer Services Collaborative 'Improvement Partnership'*) and Susan Wood (*"Nursing Excellence – The UK Way" University of Kentucky Hospital/UK Children's Hospital*) show how AI can be highly effective at quickly building support amongst healthcare's many constituency groups in the early stages of a change project. Lastly, in *Viewpoint AI Practitioner* founder, Anne Radford shares her observations and comments about the development of AI in healthcare.

If you have stories of appreciative inquiry in health care, please let us know. We hope to continue illuminating these exciting projects in future. Please join us at the upcoming International AI Conference in September. There will be a sessions on the nursing excellence initiative at the University of Kentucky and the AI customer service effort at Methodist Medical Center. As well as an open session about the use of AI in healthcare. We hope you can join us for a rich dialogue on how AI is helping to transform healthcare and create positive futures.

Ed Groody and Susan Wood  
Guest editors, May 2004