



Teaching, mentoring and leadership in general practice

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Definition

Doctors have long held a tradition of teaching. The Hippocratic Oath refers to the importance of teaching and mentoring.¹ Even the origins of the word 'doctor' come from the Old French for 'teacher', based on the Latin 'docere' (Oxford English Dictionary).

General practitioners possess many teaching skills that are often not recognised. All GPs educate their patients, and these teaching skills can be transferred to teaching medical students, general practice registrars, peers and health professionals. The skills for teaching can be acquired throughout the professional life, beginning in medical school.

Related to mentoring and teaching is leadership, which is being increasingly identified as a key skill vital to the success of healthcare, including general practice.²

Leadership involves setting a vision for people, and inspiring and setting organisational values and strategic direction.³

Leadership is different from management, which involves directing people and resources to achieve organisational goals set in place by leaders.³

While distinct, both leadership and management are critical to achieving organisational success.³

Curriculum in practice

The following scenarios illustrate how the teaching, mentoring and leadership curriculum applies to the general practice setting:

- Chris had believed the practice was too busy to become involved in teaching, until he was presented with a model that used vertical integration of curriculum between their registrar and a student who would be attached to the practice for 2 days a week for 12 months. The student was pre-trained in the use of medical software and presented cases through parallel consulting. This enabled the practice to maintain full clinical loads while still meeting the education and supervision needs of their trainees. The teaching is shared with an adjacent practice for some group sessions, which have enhanced overall collegiate relationships.
- Four years after arranging a practice swap, two doctors remain in a mentoring relationship separated by over 500 km. The experience has enabled a younger solo GP to remain in her small country town and to make changes that enable more sustainable practice. She has gone on to become a general practice supervisor and to mentor, in turn, a solo doctor in a more remote setting.
- The registrar in your practice is about to attend a clinical leadership event and wants to know your views on how leadership differs from management. Do you think there is also a difference between leadership in the hospital sector and in general practice? If so, why? Do you think that leadership is a skill that can be taught?

Rationale and general practice context

Professional codes of ethics highlight the professional obligation and tradition of passing on knowledge and skills to colleagues and students, for example, 'Honour your obligation to pass on your professional knowledge and skills to colleagues and students'.¹

Teaching, mentoring and leadership roles are becoming a more common part of the everyday life of a general practice in the following ways:

- universities are directing learning away from the more traditional wards and lecture theatres of metropolitan tertiary hospitals, toward more community based settings, including general practices
- the advent of university departments of rural health and rural clinical schools in the early 21st century has seen much medical undergraduate education moved out of metropolitan centres to rural centres
- general practice vocational training has become regionalised, requiring an increasing number of teaching practices and supervisors, trainers and mentors in regional and rural Australia
- the general practice infrastructure of divisions of general practice has mainstreamed local delivery of continuing professional development
- the decentralisation of general practice education and the rise in numbers of general practice Fellows has resulted in general practice teaching and mentoring becoming a significant career path for any GP, as either a supervisor or a medical educator
- the increasing complexity of primary healthcare, the rise of quality improvement and innovation, and the move toward multidisciplinary approaches to patient care require increasing levels of leadership skills at all levels of the general practice learning life.

Educational and leadership skills of GPs

General practitioners need to develop educational and leadership skills as an integral part of their professional repertoire. The skill sets detailed in this curriculum overlap and are required by all doctors throughout each stage of the learning life. The statement also provides a guide to extension skills and learning objectives to encourage those interested in furthering a career in teaching and mentoring in general practice, in addition to developing leadership skills.

Examples of typical skill requirements that extend across teaching, mentoring and leadership (especially within a general practice clinical context) include:

- understanding the roles of teachers, mentors and leaders – when to teach and when to learn, when to lead and when to follow
- incorporating teaching, mentoring and leadership at all levels of the learning life and within an organisation
- assessment and evaluation skills
- understanding adult learning principles and different learning styles
- instructional and supervision skills
- providing feedback
- teaching and leading individuals, groups (small and large) and organisations
- ethical approaches to teaching, mentoring and leading
- skills for teaching, mentoring and leading in complex environments, especially within the context of primary care
- change management skills
- incorporating diversity into teaching, mentoring and leading, eg. in rural settings, the role of gender, culturally and linguistically diversity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settings.

Medical students – teaching, mentoring and leading

Equipping students with teaching and learning skills helps students to self direct their learning.

Programs concentrating on clinically focused topics, evidence based medicine and physical examination skills in both conventional and problem based contexts have proven to be beneficial for all students, both teachers and learners.

Peer tutoring is an educational strategy whereby student tutors – usually senior medical students – take on the helping role that facilitates first year students in activities by enabling them to support each others learning in undergraduate studies. This also helps develop team based work strategies, which lay the foundation for leadership roles, multidisciplinary care and teamwork.

Prevocational doctors – teaching, mentoring and leading

Prevocational doctors spend a significant proportion of their work time in teams leading and educating junior medical staff and medical students.

Prevocational residents also demonstrate teaching style preferences that indicate the need for education in this skills area. Often didactic approaches are used, rather than developing learner problem solving skills, and feedback is rarely used for educational purposes. They prefer to question learners rather than engage in educational discourses, demonstrate techniques and procedures, and reference literature only minimally.⁴

Several key features of teaching and mentoring skills required by graduates at this stage or hospital resident level have been identified. In particular, prevocational doctors:

- spend 20–25% of time teaching
- enjoy teaching and consider it vital for their own education, not only in clinical skills but also in their own self directed learning skills and motivation
- recognise the importance of teaching to the profession
- often have little formal instruction as educators
- would prefer to spend more time teaching than they do
- lack confidence teaching when they need education in areas taught
- demonstrate improvement in teaching skills when they are given formal tuition in teaching
- demonstrate improvement in clinical skills and knowledge, although this cannot be directly attributable to the teaching skills program alone.

Teacher training is therefore recommended for all doctors in their postgraduate hospital years.

The presence of leadership skills has been linked to the provisions of high quality care, especially within complex systems by helping ensure that the patient is the central focus of multidisciplinary care.

Vocational doctors – teachers, learners and leaders

Both the teacher and learner benefit from peer assisted learning. Universities are encouraging vertical integration of medical education, and general practice trainees are increasingly likely to experience roles in teaching medical students within the practices where they work. Some vocational trainees also choose to undertake an academic post at a university in which they are expected to teach medical students on campus.

Apart from student teaching, vocational trainees may frequently be involved with teaching peers and other health professionals within the training context. This may occur in workshop settings, small study groups, in individual instruction or clinical practice. Vocational trainees are also a valuable learning resource for their supervisors.

Leadership styles in the general practice setting are diverse, as most leadership models have been developed in large organisations and may not directly apply to the smaller general practice setting. Vocational training provides an opportunity to explore personal strengths and weaknesses, appreciate the role of leadership in the general practice and adapt personal leadership qualities to the primary care setting within the context of increasingly team based and multidisciplinary approaches.

Postvocational doctors – teachers, mentors and leaders

General practitioners need to develop, maintain and expand skills as trainers, educators, mentors, researchers and leaders over their professional lifetime.

Many GPs will be involved in a variety of teaching roles, eg. staff education or educating medical students (in their practice or in a more formal academic setting), postvocational doctors and colleagues in a peer education process or in ‘train the trainer’ settings.

Effective teaching demands ongoing review of educational skills, and professional development programs need to consider and review the level of teaching skills required in order to develop and maintain teaching skills to the appropriate standards.

Being involved as a clinical leader is seen as a critical aspect of continuous quality improvement within the practice setting

Related curriculum areas

Refer also to the curriculum statement:

- *Philosophy and foundation of general practice.*

Training outcomes of the five domains of general practice

1. Communication skills and the patient-doctor relationship

- TMLT1.1 Use good communication skills to ensure that educational and instructional messages are understood.
- TMLT1.2 Listen to the learner's needs to ensure that teaching occurs at the appropriate level and in the appropriate context.
- TMLT1.3 Use appropriate feedback when teaching, mentoring and leading in general practice.
- TMLT1.4 Recognise that the learner-teacher relationship is the most important factor in the effectiveness of the supervision.
- TMLT1.5 Use reflection and discussion as learning tools in general practice.
- TMLT1.6 Acquire good interviewing and facilitation skills.

2. Applied professional knowledge and skills

- TMLT2.1 Use educational and teaching skills when educating patients about treatment, eg. treatment adherence and lifestyle measures.
- TMLT2.2 Have specific knowledge and skills about teaching, learning and leadership, and understand that clinical skills and knowledge are not necessarily enough to be an effective teacher or leader.
- TMLT2.3 Maintain current and adequate clinical knowledge of the proposed teaching topic.
- TMLT2.4 Undertake and provide instruction and practice in teaching skill throughout all stages of medical and general practice training.
- TMLT2.5 Be aware of the range of learning styles, and be able to adjust teaching methods appropriately.
- TMLT2.6 Understand adult learning principles and learning styles.
- TMLT2.7 Use evidence based approaches to teaching.
- TMLT2.8 Be aware of the nature of leadership in the clinical setting.

3. Population health and the context of general practice

- TMLT3.1 Apply teaching skills and learning resources effectively when educating patients about preventive care and lifestyle information during consultations.
- TMLT3.2 Educate the community when promoting the benefits of population based health strategies or in community education.
- TMLT3.3 Understand the impact of diversity on teaching, mentoring and leading, eg. for those in rural settings, the role of gender, for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settings.
- TMLT3.4 Recognise and incorporate the complexity of general practice into teaching mentoring and leading.

4. Professional and ethical role

- TMLT4.1 Understand the roles of teachers, mentors and leaders across the doctors learning life, eg. when to teach, when to learn, when to lead and when to follow.
- TMLT4.2 Be able to learn within group settings and work within teams.
- TMLT4.3 Respect the professional obligation of passing on knowledge and skills to colleagues and students.
- TMLT4.4 Recognise that teaching and mentoring require a degree of sharing of the teacher's clinical expertise.
- TMLT4.5 Focus teaching aims to improve patient outcomes and never to the detriment of the patient.
- TMLT4.6 Understand that an effective teacher recognises their own limits (both in clinical and teaching skills) and knowledge.
- TMLT4.7 Show enthusiasm for teaching, learning and general practice.
- TMLT4.8 Incorporate ethical approaches into teaching, mentoring and leading.

5. Organisational and legal dimensions

- TMLT5.1 Set aside and protect teaching time from other intrusions.
- TMLT5.2 Ensure that the learning environment promotes effective teaching and learning, including online teaching.
- TMLT5.3 Maintain overall responsibility for the patient's care when supervising clinician teaching, although the learners may be given increasing responsibility in patient care.
- TMLT5.4 Be available, accessible and approachable for effective teaching and supervision in general practice.
- TMLT5.5 Recognise the role of teaching, mentoring and leadership in change management.

Learning objectives across the GP professional life

Medical student

1. Communication skills and the patient-doctor relationship

- TMLLM1.1 Demonstrate ability to respond to the personal learning problems, challenges and triumphs of others.
- TMLLM1.2 Demonstrate awareness of the influence of personal feelings on the student's learning behaviour.
- TMLLM1.3 Describe how to build on one's own learning and leadership strengths.
- TMLLM1.4 When involved in teaching, demonstrate how to offer constructive feedback on other students' learning progress.
- TMLLM1.5 Where appropriate, demonstrate involvement in activities that enable students to support each other's learning in undergraduate studies.

2. Applied professional knowledge and skills

- TMLLM2.1 Describe the differences and relationships between teaching, mentoring and leadership skills.
- TMLLM2.2 Demonstrate how to make learning contracts.
- TMLLM2.3 Describe adult learning principles.
- TMLLM2.4 Demonstrate appropriate knowledge and experience of subject areas to be effective in teaching.
- TMLLM2.5 Demonstrate provision of reliable evidence based current information and resources.
- TMLLM2.6 Demonstrate effective interviewing and facilitation skills.
- TMLLM2.7 Integrate a variety of interactive teaching methods to engage students, including discussion, interactive lectures using computer based presentations and other audiovisual aids, and small group breakout sessions.
- TMLLM2.8 Describe how to self critique each session.
- TMLLM2.9 Reflect on the effectiveness of the chosen teaching methods.
- TMLLM2.10 Describe the nature and impact of leadership, especially within the clinical setting.

3. Population health and the context of general practice

- TMLLM3.1 Identify sociocultural and other population health factors, which may inhibit learning and prevent undertaking leadership roles.
- TMLLM3.2 Describe the relevance of the learning experience to the student and how this could vary according to a student's background.
- TMLLM3.3 Describe the use of teaching and learning into clinical practice to assist patient behaviour change.

4. Professional and ethical role

- TMLLM4.1 Demonstrate insight into personal learning gaps.
- TMLLM4.2 Demonstrate the ability to change between the roles of student and teacher, and the roles of leader and follower.
- TMLLM4.3 Develop peer support systems for students.
- TMLLM4.4 Encourage peer support and learning through self role-modelling.
- TMLLM4.5 Encourage reflection by students.
- TMLLM4.6 Describe the importance of learning to recognise one's own limits.
- TMLLM4.7 Structure a learning plan to address identified gaps in knowledge or skills.
- TMLLM4.8 Encourage students to participate in planning curriculum.
- TMLLM4.9 Develop educational activities in collaboration with a supervising mentor academic.
- TMLLM4.10 Encourage and support student discussion and clinical questioning on a peer-to-peer basis.
- TMLLM4.11 Describe the professional roles of doctors in teams.
- TMLLM4.12 Outline the professional importance of teaching.

5. Organisational and legal dimensions

- TMLLM5.1 Demonstrate how to organise time to enable student-teacher access and discussion.
- TMLLM5.2 Work in collaboration with academic teachers, peers and teams.
- TMLLM5.3 Undertake assessment of student learning and course materials.
- TMLLM5.4 Discuss teamwork in teaching, learning, mentoring and leadership.

Learning objectives across the GP professional life

Prevocational doctor

Assumed level of knowledge – medical student

1. Communication skills and the patient-doctor relationship

- TMLLP1.1** Demonstrate a sound understanding of the application of communication skills in the teaching, mentoring and leadership context, particularly in the areas of:
- TMLLP1.1.1** developing and maintaining rapport
 - TMLLP1.1.2** empathy
 - TMLLP1.1.3** communicating a nonjudgmental, respectful and supportive attitude
 - TMLLP1.1.4** appropriate use of nonverbal behaviour
 - TMLLP1.1.5** articulating context, intent and planning (what's happening, and what will happen next)
 - TMLLP1.1.6** code switching, as in addressing different audiences (patient, family members, staff, students, leaders).
- TMLLP1.2** Demonstrate a sound understanding of the application of communication skills in the teaching role, particularly in:
- TMLLP1.2.1** facilitating learning as well as delivering content
 - TMLLP1.2.2** supporting student centred learning as well as delivering a normative curriculum
 - TMLLP1.2.3** mentoring students and offering a learning role model as well as teaching clinical skills
 - TMLLP1.2.4** developing and offering a safe, supportive learning environment.
- TMLLP1.3** Demonstrate an inclusive, team based communication approach to teaching and leadership that, where appropriate, involves:
- TMLLP1.3.1** orienting students to the learning environment
 - TMLLP1.3.2** orienting staff and patients to the student's role
 - TMLLP1.3.3** orienting students, staff and patients to the teacher's role
 - TMLLP1.3.4** communicating with the student as an integral member of the healthcare team
 - TMLLP1.3.5** clearly articulating team roles, responsibilities and expectations.

2. Applied professional knowledge and skills

- TMLLP2.1** Apply adult learning principles in the teaching context.
- TMLLP2.2** Assess the learning needs of students, particularly gaps in learner knowledge and skills.
- TMLLP2.3** Develop a teaching agenda that focuses on what students should learn (eg. normative curriculum) as well as what they want to learn (student centred learning intent), particularly by:
- TMLLP2.3.1** assisting learners to 'learn' rather than you 'teaching' what you know
 - TMLLP2.3.2** drawing on the learner's own knowledge, skills and experience

- TMLLP2.8.8 providing guidance to appropriate reading materials
 - TMLLP2.8.9 providing feedback.
- TMLLP2.9 Demonstrate an understanding of the appropriate use of a range of teaching methods to enable learners to meet their learning needs and satisfy normative learning objectives, such as:
 - TMLLP2.9.1 lectures
 - TMLLP2.9.2 small group discussion, particularly to promote active learning and relationship building
 - TMLLP2.9.3 roleplays
 - TMLLP2.9.4 bedside teaching
 - TMLLP2.9.5 teaching in the clinic
 - TMLLP2.9.6 teaching microskills
 - TMLLP2.9.7 setting clear learning expectations
 - TMLLP2.9.8 discussing/questioning, asking questions that promote learning (eg. clarifications, Socratic questions, probes, reflective questions).
- TMLLP2.10 Motivate learners by:
 - TMLLP2.10.1 asking learners to commit to a diagnosis or plan
 - TMLLP2.10.2 probing for supporting evidence/thought processes
 - TMLLP2.10.3 directing attention
 - TMLLP2.10.4 psychomotor skills
 - TMLLP2.10.5 demonstrating techniques and teaching procedures
 - TMLLP2.10.6 checking for understanding and retention
 - TMLLP2.10.7 presentation skills, eg. lecture, small group, delivering information/teaching skills in short periods of time
 - TMLLP2.10.8 giving feedback, particularly on specific knowledge or skills or techniques or evidence
 - TMLLP2.10.9 inviting questions (now or later).
- TMLLP2.11 Structure an evaluation process that will enable improvement of the educational process, particularly in relation to:
 - TMLLP2.11.1 360 degree evaluation (student, faculty, self assessment)
 - TMLLP2.11.2 creating the agenda and opportunity for future learning
 - TMLLP2.11.3 offering quality assurance
 - TMLLP2.11.4 implementing assessment processes that will enable learning outcomes to be measured
 - TMLLP2.11.5 delivering content to the limit of their own knowledge and skills.

3. Population health and the context of general practice

- TMLLP3.1 Demonstrate the effective use of teaching skills and learning resources effectively when educating patients about preventive care and lifestyle information during consultations.
- TMLLP3.2 Describe the impact of patient diversity on educating patients in the clinical context, eg. those in rural settings, the role of gender, for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settings.

4. Professional and ethical role

- TMLLP4.1 Model professional and ethical behaviour as a teacher, mentor and leader.
- TMLLP4.2 Demonstrate a teaching focus that aims to improve patient outcomes and never to the detriment of the patient.
- TMLLP4.3 Manage interpersonal behaviour in a manner appropriate to the relevant teacher, mentor or leader roles and responsibilities.
- TMLLP4.4 Demonstrate an enthusiastic and motivational attitude to students and to teaching.
- TMLLP4.5 Demonstrate accountability for teaching and learning process and outcomes.
- TMLLP4.6 Structure an evaluation process that offers quality assurance to peers, faculty and students.
- TMLLP4.7 Identify the roles of teachers, mentors and leaders in the current clinical setting.
- TMLLP4.8 Demonstrate the ability to work as a leader and a follower within teams.
- TMLLP4.9 Incorporate ethical approaches into teaching, mentoring and leading in current clinical setting.

5. Organisational and legal dimensions

- TMLLP5.1 Manage time efficiently and effectively to enable both teaching and mentoring and caregiving in the clinical context.
- TMLLP5.2 Articulate, as required, the legal constraints and limitations of the teacher/mentor's role in the specific educational context, eg. privacy legislation and equal opportunity laws.
- TMLLP5.3 Outline how to make a learning environment promote effective teaching and learning within the current clinical context, including online environments.
- TMLLP5.4 Maintain overall responsibility for the patient's care when supervising clinician teaching, although the learners may be given increasing responsibility in patient care.
- TMLLP5.5 Recognise the role of teaching, mentoring and leadership in change management in the current clinical environment.

Learning objectives across the GP professional life

Vocational registrar

Assumed level of knowledge – prevocational doctor

1. Communication skills and the patient-doctor relationship

- TMLLV1.1 Demonstrate basic teaching, mentoring and leadership skills including:
- TMLLV1.1.1 clearly explaining to learners the reasoning behind the use of particular clinical strategies
 - TMLLV1.1.2 formulating appropriate questions to encourage learners to develop problem solving skills
 - TMLLV1.1.3 discussing and demonstrating strategies to help develop rapport with the learner/mentee/follower.
- TMLLV1.2 Demonstrate, where appropriate, extension teaching, mentoring and leadership skills, including:
- TMLLV1.2.1 demonstrating the ability to provide constructive and specific feedback to learners, which challenges them to reflect and expand their skills
 - TMLLV1.2.2 demonstrating the appropriate use of the range of public presentation audiovisual aids and educational resource technology in delivering education to peers and undergraduates
 - TMLLV1.2.3 practising effective communication skills for facilitating learning within one-to-one, small group and larger group contexts.

2. Applied professional knowledge and skills

- TMLLV2.1 Divide tasks or knowledge into manageable portions to improve learning opportunities.
- TMLLV2.2 Identify the level at which learning needs to occur for different learners.
- TMLLV2.3 Develop personal learning plans and objectives based on identification of learning needs and development of learning activities and strategies to fulfil these objectives.

3. Population health and the context of general practice

- TMLLV3.1 Explain the characteristics of a nurturing environment, which encourages learning and professional development.
- TMLLV3.2 Identify factors that may inhibit learning and discuss strategies suitable to address them.
- TMLLV3.3 Demonstrate the effective use of teaching skills and learning resources effectively when educating patients about preventive care and lifestyle information during general practice consultations.
- TMLLV3.4 Describe the impact of patient diversity on educating patients in the general practice context, eg. those in rural settings, the role of gender, for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settings.

4. Professional and ethical role

- TMLLV4.1 Explain circumstances that would demonstrate appropriate supervision of learners and in leadership roles.
- TMLLV4.2 Demonstrate appropriate professional and leadership roles to learners.
- TMLLV4.3 Model appropriate attitudes to learning, leadership and professionalism.
- TMLLV4.4 Identify own limits when teaching others.
- TMLLV4.5 Outline setting and maintaining appropriate, clear role boundaries.
- TMLLV4.6 Discuss strategies that can be used to stimulate learning and encourage reflection.
- TMLLV4.7 Describe the roles and responsibilities of a clinical leader.

5. Organisational and legal dimensions

- TMLLV5.1 Identify and create suitable learning opportunities within consultations.
- TMLLV5.2 Explain how to obtain patient consent for the teaching process within the consultation.
- TMLLV5.3 Arrange for sufficient time for discussion.
- TMLLV5.4 Describe the legislative requirements associated with teaching and learning, such as copyright, privacy and public lending rights.
- TMLLV5.5 Outline the responsibilities and requirements involved when undertaking teaching within the general practice setting as appropriate.

Learning objectives across the GP professional life

Continuing professional development

Assumed level of knowledge – vocational registrar

1. Communication skills and the patient-doctor relationship

- TMLLC1.1 Consider continuing education on communication skills for effective teaching.
- TMLLC1.2 Demonstrate ability to provide effective feedback to learners.
- TMLLC1.3 Outline the communication skills involved in being a leader and a follower.

2. Applied professional knowledge and skills

- TMLLC2.1 Describe a range of teaching techniques and their appropriateness to different settings.
- TMLLC2.2 Develop further skills in teaching.
- TMLLC2.3 Demonstrate the ability to assess and deal with students needing further assistance (eg. remediation).
- TMLLC2.4 Outline the skills required for a clinical leader within the current practice setting.

3. Population health and the context of general practice

- TMLLC3.1 Describe differences in individual needs and learning styles between students and registrars and demonstrate ability to adapt to those differences.

4. Professional and ethical role

- TMLLC4.1 Become involved in a network of teachers, professional educator organisations and education providers to encourage further skills development.
- TMLLC4.2 Demonstrate awareness of potential conflicts that may occur with an increasing variety of roles, eg. teacher, employer, supervisor, examiner, GP, leader.
- TMLLC4.3 Describe the role of being alert to one's own limitations in teaching skills and be able to involve others if needed.
- TMLLC4.4 Identify personal clinical leadership roles within the current clinical setting and their role in quality improvement and team based care.

5. Organisational and legal dimensions

- TMLLC5.1 Describe the effects of teaching on the running of a general practice in terms of space, time and finances.
- TMLLC5.2 Outline the role of online delivery in teaching, mentoring and leadership.
- TMLLC5.3 Recognise the need for ongoing support and resources from organisations involved in training and education.
- TMLLC5.4 Identify organisational personal leadership roles within the current clinical setting and their role in quality improvement and team based care.
- TMLLC5.5 Incorporate clinical leadership roles into quality improvement cycles.

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