The Unintended Consequences of Innovation

Great efforts have been made during the past decade to increase our production of evidence-based practices. As we have created more confirming data about what comprises a best practice around a particular issue, we have begun to turn to being more innovative. We still have a gap between cutting-edge organizations and their generation of evidence and the adoption of that evidence into widespread practice. Yet, all health care organizations are focused on increasing efficiency, improving quality, and providing safe patient care.

Meanwhile, some organizations have taken on the challenge of innovation. That activity involves relying on synthesizing disparate data to create a new view of an issue. How we all support innovations in nursing may be the avenue for ensuring nursing’s place in the evolving health care landscape. The challenge is to be as creative as possible while attempting to have minimal risks. Then, as the popular saying goes, “we have to put our money where our mouth is.” In other words, we need to support those risk takers who do innovative work, including supporting them through failures. Perhaps because of our history, it is difficult for us to move to a blame-free approach. Perhaps because of our comfort with the present, we hope the new will fail. Perhaps we are afraid of our potential success and the implications and expectations success creates for us as nurses.

Unless failure results in harm to patients or colleagues, we should celebrate failures. After all, failures basically eliminate one of the many options for resolving an issue and narrow the field of other possibilities. We all may not be the innovators in the profession, but we all must advocate for innovation.

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