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Square Pegs and Round Holes: Application of ISO 9000 in Healthcare

Michael John Thornber

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the beginning of the PhD research, I assumed that the whole exercise would be just another project in my professional career. Now, at the end, I know better. Crafting my PhD has been a huge intellectual challenge and tested my self-discipline to its limits.

Throughout the research a number of people and organisations gave their support and assistance. I would like to acknowledge and thank them here.

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the application of the ISO 9000 model for quality management in healthcare. Exploratory case study is made of three healthcare provider organisations: community health service; independent practitioner association; Maori health network.

Three research models are developed to examine identified gaps and areas of interest in healthcare quality management literature. The first model relates to differences between generic standards and specification standards. The second model relates to the fit of healthcare service delivery systems and ISO 9000. The third model relates to exploration of the linkages and co-ordination of an integrated care delivery network. One proposition and two hypotheses are developed in relation to the models, and are closely associated with gaps in healthcare service quality knowledge.

Strong support is found for the first hypothesis though not the second hypothesis, and there are also some unexpected results. There is strong support that the process of implementing the ISO 9000 model will enhance healthcare management performance, even though the outcomes are unpredictable. There are indications supporting the notion that implementation of the ISO 9000 model will increase effective linkages and co-ordination within integrated care delivery networks. The body of evidence accumulated during the study did not, however, permit a valid conclusion regarding the hypothesis.

The findings of the study can be extended to other healthcare service areas and through interpretation and extrapolation they add value to healthcare service quality research in general. In particular, the findings of the three case studies in this research suggest that future models for healthcare service quality should include a comprehensive generic model for quality management of individual and integrated healthcare service organisations.
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<td>Australian Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CME</td>
<td>Continuing Medical Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>General Practitioner</td>
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<td>HHS</td>
<td>Health and Hospital Service</td>
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<td>IPA</td>
<td>Independent Practitioner Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISO</td>
<td>International Organisation for Standardization</td>
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<td>JCAHO</td>
<td>Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organisations</td>
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<td>NZCHS</td>
<td>New Zealand Council on Health Care Standards</td>
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<td>PPMC</td>
<td>Physician Practice Management Company</td>
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<td>RNZCGP</td>
<td>Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners</td>
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<td>TQM</td>
<td>Total Quality Management</td>
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