

Simple Rules for Better Health Care System in the 21st Century	
Current Approach	New Rule
Care is based primarily on visits	Care is based on continuous healing relationships
Professional autonomy drives variability	Care is customised according to patients' needs and values
Professionals control care	The patient is the source of control
Information is a record	Knowledge is shared and information freely flows
Decision making is based in training and experience	Decision making is evidence based
Do no harm is an individual responsibility	Safety is a system property
Secrecy is necessary	Transparency is necessary
The system reacts to needs	Needs are anticipated
Cost reduction is sought	Waste is continuously decreased
Preference is given to professional roles over the system	Cooperation amongst clinicians is a priority

Figure 1 Source: Institute of Medicine Committee on Quality Healthcare in America

The Health and Social Care system is complex and our traditional ways of managing the system make this complexity greater. Complex systems are basically not safe; people have to negotiate safety while negotiating multiple system goals (Sidney Dekker). Instead of managing the system and flow for patients we break the system up into teams; directorates etc. all working independently making work harder; with more work arounds and hoops to manage. Because we know the system isn't safe; we create more bureaucracy for front line teams to negotiate and more don'ts than do's; If something goes wrong we look for who to blame when in most cases the incident will have been cause by chaos in the system. A culture of fear then abounds.

All too often a change is made to one part of the system independently that has a major negative impact at another point in the system – remember the 2 week wait for cancer services that hit the diagnostic services further upstream with the change in demand patterns? You knew in 2 weeks that you might have a cancer and needed to wait 40 weeks for the diagnostic tests to confirm or dispel the potential diagnosis.

The harder complex systems are pushed with complex rules – the harder the system will fight back. Complex systems need simple rules that make managing the complexity easier.