

"Connecting Governance Culture and Hospital Performance Improvement"

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To measure the impact a corporate board has on performance improvement in healthcare, a series of interviews with five hospital CEOs and their board chairs were conducted by Dr. Kathryn McDonagh, a healthcare executive based in Atlanta, Thomson Healthcare Performance Improvement and 100 Top Hospitals Program Senior Vice President Jean Chenoweth and colleagues. Research shows a clear link between good governance and organization performance. The CEOs interviewed headed performance improvement initiatives, while boards were responsible for oversight. Although the boards interviewed all perform comprehensive evaluations, they generally lacked action plans to bolster performance. Efforts to boost board effectiveness should involve assessing the strengths and weaknesses of individual members and comparing performance over the long term. A majority of the CEOs interviewed were not subjected to evaluations by their boards, and most organizations lacked formal, yearly reviews and examinations of decisions made by the board. The interviews also determined that boards with political structures have less time to devote to performance improvement and that those with consistent strategic planning processes typically report higher levels of performance improvement. There are a variety of factors that motivate hospitals to pay attention to performance improvement, ranging from a commitment to quality patient care to the need for financial improvement. The interviewers determined that boards need to be willing to make improvements and monitor progress; implement strong reporting systems to hold members accountable; and foster cultures of teamwork, self-education, strategic focus and a passion for excellence.