



The True Story of an Unlikely Cure for U.S.'s Sick Hospitals and Health System

In The Nun and the Bureaucrat book and video set, doctors, nurses, and administrators at two large hospital systems explain how lean management methods adopted from Toyota cut costs while improving care and staff morale -- without outside funds or government help.

Cambridge, Mass., March 18, 2009 -- Hospital administrators, doctors, and nurses know this -- most American hospitals are sick, they are crippled by inadequate, outdated management practices, and they breed avoidable, often deadly, mistakes.

They also know that hospitals are where the turnaround in healthcare costs and safety must begin.

At two hospital systems, the turnaround has begun, thanks to the adoption of methods from Toyota, which pioneered a complete new business system for auto manufacturing, called lean management that now is spreading to other industrial and service companies, especially healthcare.

The remarkable story of how healthcare professionals found a powerful but unlikely cure for what ails hospitals and healthcare is clearly and invitingly told in *The Nun and the Bureaucrat*, a book and video set, available from the nonprofit [Lean Enterprise Institute](http://lean.org).

Lean Thinking Is Systems Thinking

[*The Nun and the Bureaucrat*](#) describes how doctors, nurses, and administrators at SSM Health Care, one of the largest Catholic healthcare systems in the U.S. (the Nun) and the Pittsburgh Regional Healthcare Initiative, (the Bureaucrat) adapted concepts and tools from [the Toyota Production System](#) to recognize and eliminate nonvalue-creating steps in processes. An important lesson was to tackle the complexity of hospitals with a “systems thinking” approach of viewing and transforming organizations as a whole rather than as a collection of separate parts or departments.

“What these hospital personnel gained from Toyota, write authors Louis M. Savary and Clare Crawford-Mason, “was the knowledge, training, and scientific tools to develop teams of people who could:

- become greater than the sum of their parts,
- work together more effectively and efficiently,
- continually improve the processes involved in their jobs,
- see how their individual work contributes to the aim of the whole system.”

Not Just for Healthcare

The 272-page book and one-hour DVD set was designed and priced to be used as a resource at all levels of healthcare organizations, companies, schools, or government agencies. It is currently being used in colleges to teach systems thinking, because the hospital example is familiar territory.

The set was developed to help people see work with what one leader called “new eyes.” Rather than focusing on solving the problems of an organization’s individual parts, management and employees in *The Nun and the Bureaucrat* learned how to focus on creating a cooperative environment in which people pursued continuous improvement of processes, the larger system, and themselves.

The book and video show how everyone -- from the CEO to the newest department hire -- can make that system better every single day. The book recounts how doctors and nurses were dubious that the Toyota system would work in their hospital and today are delighted by their increased effectiveness and time with patients.

“It will inspire and instruct an entire organization to create a single vision of a new system designed around the patient,” said Michael Brassard, president of LEI’s Lean Learning Materials value stream. “Just as importantly, it shows how everyone -- from the CEO to the newest department hire -- can help make that system better every single day.”

Affordably Priced

Both the book and video of the PBS documentary “Good News ... How Hospitals Heal Themselves” were created by CC-M Productions, creators of one of the most-watched documentaries in U.S. history, “If Japan Can, Why Can’t We?” This landmark 1980 NBC white paper introduced Dr. W. Edwards Deming to an American audience and is often cited as *the* catalyst for the U.S. quality revolution. “Good News ... How Hospitals Heal Themselves” is written and hosted by Lloyd Dobyns, the Peabody Medal-winning journalist who hosted “If Japan Can, Why Can’t We.”

The set has been reduced from its initial professional management price of \$165 to \$40 because the producers, who did the project pro-bono, wanted to make the set available for both professional managers and anyone who might have to use a hospital or advise a relative, so they will be better able to recognize and demand continually improving care.

Interim results from individual hospitals (p.225) included:

- an 85% reduction in hospital acquired infections that were often fatal and cost \$30,000 - \$90,000 each,
- a 63% reduction in central line infections since 2001, half of which are fatal and each cost \$30,000 to treat,
- lowering of staph infections from 26 per thousand patients to 8 per thousand,
- decreasing intensive care unit mortality from 5.5% to 3.3% ,
- shrinking acute diabetic complications from 5.5% to 3.3%.

View a clip from the DVD:

<http://www.lean.org/Bookstore/ProductDetails.cfm?SelectedProductID=249>

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What is Lean? <http://www.lean.org/WhatsLean/>

The Toyota Production System was developed by Toyota Motor Corporation to provide the best quality, lowest cost, and shortest lead time through the elimination of waste. Widespread recognition of TPS as the model production system grew rapidly with the publication in 1990 of *The Machine That Changed the World*, the result of five years of research led by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The MIT research team, headed by LEI Founder James P. Womack, Ph.D, found that TPS was so much more effective and efficient than traditional mass production and management systems that it represented a completely new paradigm and coined the term “lean production.” The MIT researchers described lean as a complete business system for organizing and managing product development, operations, suppliers, customer relations, and the overall enterprise that requires less human effort, less space, less capital, less material, and less time to produce products and services with fewer defects to precise customer desires, compared with traditional modern management.

About the Lean Enterprise Institute

LEI was founded in 1997 by management expert [James P. Womack, Ph.D.](http://www.lean.org/WhoWeAre/LeanPerson.cfm?LeanPersonId=1), (<http://www.lean.org/WhoWeAre/LeanPerson.cfm?LeanPersonId=1>) as a nonprofit education, publishing, conference, and research organization with a mission to advance lean thinking around the world. We teach courses, hold lean management seminars, write and publish books and workbooks, and organize public and private conferences. We use the surplus revenues from these activities to conduct research projects and to support other lean initiatives such as the [Lean Education Academic Network](#) and the [Lean Global Network](#). For more information visit LEI at <http://www.lean.org>. Lean Enterprise Institute and the leaper image are registered trademarks of Lean Enterprise Institute, Inc.

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What the Experts Say about *The Nun and the Bureaucrat...*

“If you think that hospital care cannot be significantly improved in quality and cost, you have another think coming. Read this book.”

- *Dr. Russell Ackoff, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, The Wharton School. Author: Ackoff's Best; The Democratic Corporation; and Redesigning Society (with Sheldon Roven)*

“This book describes the kind of leadership that’s essential for making our hospitals safe and patient friendly and at the same time cutting costs by driving out waste. And that is leadership that employs systems thinking to realize an inspiring vision. Read this book to learn how two leaders educated and transformed their hospitals. They show the way that others can and should follow.”

- *Michael Maccoby, M.D., anthropologist, psychoanalyst and consultant on leadership. Author, The Gamesman; Why Work?; and Narcissistic Leaders, Who Succeeds and Who Fails*

“If ever there was an idea whose time has come, this is the idea and this is the time.”

- *Cal Thomas, syndicated columnist (Denver Post, Baltimore Sun, etc.)*

“This book gives me hope that we can make similar improvements at many hospitals around the country.”

- *Kenneth H. Cohn, MD, MBA, Cambridge Management Group. Author: Better Communication for Better Care: Mastering Physician-Administrator Collaboration*

“These authors have created an inviting introduction to health care as a system. In the midst of widespread recognition that we must improve our health care, they offer a starting point for creating the changes we need. Their attention to the insightful people making these changes happen allows us to learn from what’s working. They have seen what is hard to see at first: health care as a system. Their writing is clear and inviting. In short, this is a welcome addition to the public conversation. Read it, share it and tell your elected officials about what you now understand needs to be encouraged to make health care better.”

- *Paul Batalden, M.D., Professor, Dartmouth Medical School*