

Cambridge Elements

Elements of Improving Quality and Safety in Healthcare

edited by

Mary Dixon-Woods,^{*} Katrina Brown,^{*} Sonja Marjanovic,[†]
Tom Ling,[†] Ellen Perry^{*} and Graham Martin^{*}

^{*}*THIS Institute (The Healthcare Improvement Studies Institute)*

[†]*RAND Europe*

CO-PRODUCING AND CO-DESIGNING

Glenn Robert,¹ Louise Locock,² Oli Williams,¹
Jocelyn Cornwell,³ Sara Donetto¹ and
Joanna Goodrich^{1,3}

¹ *Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery & Palliative Care, King's
College London*

² *Health Services Research Unit, University of Aberdeen*

³ *The Point of Care Foundation*

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Co-Producing and Co-Designing

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Glenn Robert,¹ Louise Locock,² Oli Williams,¹ Jocelyn Cornwell,³
Sara Donetto¹ and Joanna Goodrich^{1,3}

¹ *Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery & Palliative Care, King's College London*

² *Health Services Research Unit, University of Aberdeen*

³ *The Point of Care Foundation*

Author for correspondence: Glenn Robert, glenn.robert@kcl.ac.uk

Abstract: Many healthcare improvement approaches originated in manufacturing, where end users are framed as consumers. But in healthcare, greater recognition of the complexity of relationships between patients, staff, and services (beyond a provider–consumer exchange) is generating new insights and approaches to healthcare improvement informed directly by patient and staff experience. Co-production sees patients as active contributors to their own health and explores how interactions with staff and services can best be supported. Co-design is a related but distinct creative process where patients and staff work in partnership to improve services or develop interventions. Both approaches are promoted for their technocratic benefits (better experiences, more effective and safer services) and democratic rationales (enabling inclusivity and equity), but the evidence base remains limited. This Element explores the origins of co-production and co-design, the development of approaches in healthcare, and associated challenges; in reviewing the evidence, it highlights the implications for practice and research. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Keywords: accelerated experience-based co-design, co-production, co-design, experience-based co-design, EBCD

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