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## Delivering Safe, High-Quality, Patient-Centric Care



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At RSNA 2021's opening session on 28 November, Dr James Merlino of the Cleveland Clinic discussed strategies to improve the patient experience and healthcare delivery. His address followed RSNA president Dr Mary Mahoney's opening address. Dr Merlino, a colorectal surgeon, leads patient-centric efforts at the Cleveland Clinic and serves as president, chief medical officer and chief transformation officer at the consulting firm Press Ganey.

Dr Merlino shares his insights gained from his medical career, spanning over 30 years. Patients want respect, communication, consistency, and empathy from their healthcare providers. Communication and coordination between all healthcare team members is key to providing reliable, high-quality care. Furthermore, this produces resilience in the organization to meet the high strain that accompanies crises, as exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Merlino adds: 'the integrative perspective that the patient experience is... is about delivering safe, high-quality, patient-centric care on this foundation of higher reliability.' He warns that the messaging concerning these processes must be integrated, or 'people will get confused and not know what to focus on.'

Most importantly, he asserts that, by meeting these endpoints, better and safer care is delivered to the patient. 'It's not about happiness. It's not about satisfaction.' He makes a compelling case citing multiple studies. For instance, the top quartile hospitals in the U.S. CMS HCAHPS survey show fewer complications, lower length of stay, lower Medicare spending per patient, fewer 30-day readmissions, and higher margins. About 4.8 million preventable healthcare errors lead to 440,000 deaths across approximately 5,000 hospitals in the U.S. Preventable medical errors are the third leading cause of U.S. deaths. He stresses to his colleagues that this is unacceptable. This can be averted only through a culture of reliability achieved by emphasizing the patient experience.

**Source:** [RSNA](#)

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