

# **A Study on the Qualitative Improvement of Medical Organizations Providing Team-Based Stroke Care:**

## **An Approach Based on Argyris and Schön's Theory of Organizational Learning**

Kyoko Murata

The purpose of this study is to understand the mechanisms which could contribute to the improvement of medical organizations by studying medical delivery systems with a team approach using the perspective of Argyris and Schön's Organizational Learning Theory. A medical center for stroke patients was selected as the research field. The way in which medical professionals, teams, and organizations learn was also investigated using qualitative research such as participant observation, interviews and document analyses. The idea of embracing organizational learning was drawn from a claim in the report "Crossing the Quality Chasm" (2001) by the Committee on the Quality of Health Care in America at the Institute of Medicine. The committee believes that America's 21st century's health system will require that medical organizations successfully address the challenge of becoming learning organizations.

The thesis was structured as follows. Commencing with a brief introduction, in Chapter 1, the background of medical delivery and the need for a team approach, as well as the importance of organizational learning in the present medical delivery systems are outlined. Chapter 2 explains organizational learning, which particular emphasis on the contributions by Argyris and Schön. Also, early studies on organizational learning in medical care are summarized. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology and the selection criteria applied in choosing a medical center for the research field and the reasons why qualitative research methods are used. In Chapter 4, the survey results of the case study are explained and in Chapter 5, these results are discussed. From this a number of conclusions are drawn.

The original concepts (shown in italics) and findings that resulted from this study are as follows. 1) The existence of *autonomous expansive organizational learning* and the nature of its process. This emerged from the analysis of the interview data based on the grounded theory approach. 2) The existence of *enforcement and reward based organizational learning* and *imitative expansive organizational learning*. These two learning modalities were confirmed by the attention paid to the influence of the external environment. 3) In consideration of the above three organizational learning modalities it is suggested that the members of the medical organization should seek *intrinsic mutual constitution*; this is an approach by which individuals continuously intend to be shaped by the surrounding environment and simultaneously shape the environment by interacting flexibly with their environment in order to utilize these organizational learning types effectively.

The findings of this study include the consideration of the relationship with the external environment and the sustainability of Argyris and Schön's double-loop learning. The findings also indicate to members of medical organizations the direction which Argyris and Schön's organizational learning should take. They also elaborate on the proposal of the Institute of Medicine, which has not presented details on how medical organizations can become learning organizations or how organizations can learn in order to provide better medical care. In addition, the results would be useful to managers in medical organizations when they embark on developing their own organizations and to medical policy makers when they plan to build new institutions or assess medical organizations.

