

**Improving Healthcare Quality and Cost with Six Sigma, Dr. Brett E. Trusko, Carolyn Pexton, Dr. H. James Harrington and Praveen Gupta, FT Press, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458, 2007, ISBN 0-13-174171-3, 451pp., \$59.99.**

This book provides a compelling impetus that why the improvement in quality and cost in healthcare fields are needed, and further pointed out the six sigma approaches, which already being adopted in the manufacturing and the business world with ample success stories, as the methods and tools to achieve this improvement.

The first three chapters provide reasons why the cost cutting and quality improvement are needed and are hand in hand that with the improved quality the cost also reduced. Healthcare field is unique in terms of its cost structure and the end products (services provided to maintain the health of the end customers). The current reimbursement system in healthcare actually encourages inefficient practices of the medicine. The government pays for spending in curing defined sickness but not for prevention and general wellbeing of the patient. This resulted in emphasized in reimbursable procedures and neglect other more important prevention procedures but with little monetary incentives. In despite of these structural deficiencies in the healthcare system, the imperative to improve the efficiency thus the cost is still there.

Second part of the book provides some introductory materials in Six Sigma, and its applications to the healthcare industries. The third part provides case studies showcasing real cases of how a few selected healthcare organizations apply Six Sigma in improving their operations. Part four gives implementation strategies, such as treats six sigma implementation as the culture change, a transformation to a more effective operation system rather than the management of a group of improvement projects.

A few insights mentioned in the book are worth to recite in this review :  
"healthcare and government are the two major industries that have the biggest opportunity for improvement in process and quality", "... a system that rewards resource utilization", (and penalizes the efficiency), "... the cost of healthcare for losing a competitive edge in world markets.", "reduce costs and improve quality from a Six Sigma perspective-are complementary, not competing.",  
"Organizations that just use Six Sigma to solve problems have limited success."

**This book is strongly recommended for healthcare professionals to learn how the Six Sigma can help them to operate a more effective healthcare organization.**

**Shin Ta Liu**

**Lynx Systems , San Diego**