



# **An Epidemic of Empathy in Healthcare: How to Deliver Compassionate, Connected Patient Care That Creates a Competitive Advantage**

*Thomas H. Lee MD*

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## **The best strategies in healthcare begin with empathy**

Revolutionary advances in medical knowledge have caused doctors to become so focused on their narrow fields of expertise that they often overlook the simplest fact of all: their patients are *suffering*. This suffering goes beyond physical pain. It includes the fear, uncertainty, anxiety, confusion, mistrust, and waiting that so often characterize modern healthcare.

One of healthcare's most acclaimed thought leaders, Dr. Thomas H. Lee shows that world-class medical treatment and compassionate care are not mutually exclusive. In *An Epidemic of Empathy in Healthcare*, he argues that we *must* have it both ways—that combining advanced science with empathic care is the only way to build the health systems our society needs and deserves. Organizing providers so that care is compassionate and coordinated is not only the right thing to do for patients, it also forms the core of strategy in healthcare's competitive new marketplace. It provides business advantages to organizations that strive to reduce human suffering effectively, reliably, and efficiently.

Lee explains how to develop a culture that treats the patient, not the malady, and he provides step-by-step guidance for unleashing an “epidemic of empathy” by:

- Developing a shared understanding of the overarching goal—meeting patients' needs and reducing their suffering
- Making empathic care a social norm rather than the focus of economic incentives
- Pinpointing and addressing the most significant causes of patient suffering
- Collecting and using data to drive improvement

Healthcare is entering a new era driven by competition on value—meeting patients' needs as efficiently as possible. Leaders must make the choice either to move forward and build a new culture designed for twenty-first-century medicine or to maintain old models and practices and be left behind.

Lee argues that empathic care resonates with the noblest values of all clinicians. If healthcare organizations can help caregivers live up to these values and focus on alleviating their patients' suffering, they hold the key to improving value-based care and driving business success.

Join the compassionate care movement and unleash an epidemic of empathy!

**Thomas H. Lee, MD**, is Chief Medical Officer of Press Ganey, with more than three decades of experience in healthcare performance improvement as a practicing physician, leader in provider organizations, researcher, and health policy expert. He is a Professor (Part-time) of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Professor of Health Policy and Management at the Harvard School of Public Health.

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