

Dr. Ameya Kulkarni:

My name is Ameya Kulkarni, and I'm an interventional cardiologist at Kaiser Permanente. So we are able to recruit the best physicians in America because the best physicians in America want to work for a place where they are valued as physicians, where they can take care of patients the right way. People want to come work with us. They want to come work in a model where they don't have to think about how many patients they have seen, but they get to just take care of the patients in front of them. They want to be able to not worry about things like billing, and our model lets doctors do that. But once you recruit the brightest and the best physicians, you need to give them something that uses their talents to the best way we can. So in addition to letting them take care of patients, we also want to make sure that they're helping us make our system even better than it is.

One of the best examples of this is when we recruited Dr. Ben Galper who runs our Structural Heart Disease Program. He is a brilliant physician, trained at the best institutions and was recruited heavily by really everybody. And when he and I talked about what we can do here, we talked about creating magic in the Structural Heart Disease Program, creating the chance to take care of patients faster, taking care of them where they are, really making it so that their journey from anxiety to answers is as simple as possible. Typically, for these conditions, it takes nine to 12 weeks to do the evaluation, and he shrunk it to one day, where we're evaluating these very sick elderly patients in one day. It means less travel, less finding time off for their caregivers and things like that.

The other part that he worked on is shrinking the actual in-hospital experience to one day. So typically, these patients are spending two to five days in the hospital. He's made it so that more than 80% of them are going home the next day, and then he's constantly innovating on the procedure itself to use the latest techniques and some techniques that have been done less than a dozen times in the world to really make sure that we are offering the best that the world has to offer for our patients. And integrating all of that into a single program that's simple for patients to use and that requires very little effort on their part is the Holy Grail of structural heart disease. Every day, since I have been here, I've had the chance to fix something about medicine, to show the rest of the world the right way to practice, and I feel so lucky for the chance to do it.