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Sustaining innovations address existing products and processes to preserve or extend their life. For example, hospitals might implement new technologies to improve the delivery of care, or health systems may introduce new management practices to enhance efficiency and patient satisfaction.

Revolutionary innovations should comprise 10 percent of the organization’s portfolio. These innovations are not a substitute for sustaining innovations, but they should be developed alongside them. An example of a revolutionary innovation is the development of telemedicine, which has the potential to transform the way care is delivered, especially in rural or remote areas.

Disruptive innovation involves turning current practices completely upside down. This type of innovation is more complex and may involve rethinking the entire model of care delivery. For example, a disruptive solution for health care could involve developing new delivery systems to keep up with changes in the population, such as an aging population, and the socioeconomic environment.

Transformational innovations are more complex and may involve changing the business model. These innovations can lead to the creation of entirely new types of health care systems. For example, the development of medical homes and retail health clinics are examples of transformational innovations.

The place to start is at the top. Innovative leadership is a key characteristic of an innovative leader, he says. “Like quality improvement was 20 years ago, innovation is a challenge for the hospital field as it prepares for the future,” he notes. “That’s only the beginning. ‘If an organization wants to be successful, it needs to build an environment that fosters innovation and disruptive innovation, turning the health care delivery system on its head. ‘Disruptive innovation includes developing new delivery systems to keep up with changes in the population, such as an aging population, and the socioeconomic environment.’

The practice of innovation can take multiple forms. Some organizations may choose to implement disruptive innovations in a digital environment that allows for the development of new business models and allows for necessary resources to be shared. Other organizations may choose to focus on sustainability and make changes to improve the efficiency of the organization and offer a better experience to the patient. Innovative leaders must be open to new ideas and be willing to change the way things are done. "If product is to be kept modern, it must be able to change," says Newbold. "We’re not at a point in the process where we’ve got to do it with one hand tied behind our backs. We’ve got to be open to new ideas and be able to change our way of thinking."

The practice of innovation may also involve creating new paradigms. Some organizations may choose to implement disruptive innovations in a digital environment that allows for the development of new business models and allows for necessary resources to be shared. Other organizations may choose to focus on sustainability and make changes to improve the efficiency of the organization and offer a better experience to the patient. Innovative leaders must be open to new ideas and be willing to change the way things are done. "If product is to be kept modern, it must be able to change," says Newbold. "We’re not at a point in the process where we’ve got to do it with one hand tied behind our backs. We’ve got to be open to new ideas and be able to change our way of thinking."

Preparation and planning are key to the success of any innovation. Leadership and employees should be equipped with the tools and training they need to successfully engage in the innovation process. This may include training on creativity, problem-solving, and decision-making.

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