Preface: Why Did We Write This Book?

The idea hovered and shimmered delicately, like a soap bubble, and she dared not even look at it directly in case it burst. But she was familiar with the way of ideas, and she let it shimmer, looking away, thinking about something else.

Phillip Pullman, The Golden Compass

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world. The unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

George Bernard Shaw

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

You have spent a lot of money on your electronic health record (EHR) systems and other healthcare information technology (HIT) projects… and you want to see results! You know that simply recreating paper-based processes on a computer will not significantly improve quality, efficiency or your financials. But what if you had access to a book that described how others in your position have used information technology systems in an innovative fashion to solve the types of problems you face every day? We wanted that book!

However, we could not find it. We did find some pretty fantastic books on implementing information technology in healthcare and others that detailed how innovation strategies could be used in healthcare. But we could not find a book that provided real life examples and explanations of how to combine these two powerful tools. Fortunately, when we asked around, what we did find were stories from our colleagues across the nation. We found stories of success, brilliant and innovative uses of healthcare IT to improve quality, efficiency and value. We found stories from multi-hospital organizations and small clinics. We found stories right out of the

headlines and stories which have been succeeding outside the spotlight for many years. And we knew these stories should be shared to help guide the way for others.

We first thought about writing each chapter ourselves, but we quickly realized that it was the *Voice of the Innovator* which would be most revealing. We wanted the real people in the trenches who were involved with the innovations from the start to write their stories as only they could. And we asked them to provide the full arc of their story, to start with the origin of the innovation, to explain how it evolved from an idea to reality, and then to share both in the results as well as the lessons learned along the way.

We strongly believed that this robust rendering would be the most informative and powerful way to ensure that our readers could understand the innovations best, as well as visualize how they themselves could do something similar. So we invited a group of these innovators to tell us their amazing stories. We asked them to write their chapter with the passion which made their innovations great and they came through spectacularly.

Of course, we made sure that authors used a similar chapter structure for easier reading, but we relished in the fact that each chapter also has its own voice. Because of this, the book can be read cover to cover, or you can pick any chapter and read it on its own (although we suggest that all readers start off with Chaps. 1 and 2 to get a good background). Hopefully, you will find that the more you read, the more you will be inspired, educated and empowered to help move your own organization towards the intersection of innovation and healthcare IT which we call *The Healing Edge*!

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http://www.springer.com/978-1-4471-4326-0

Innovation with Information Technologies in Healthcare
Berkowitz, L.; McCarthy, C. (Eds.)
2013, XVIII, 306 p., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-1-4471-4326-0