Creating a National Research Agenda for Improvement Science
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Background:
Quality improvement and patient safety are high priorities yet insufficient progress has been made in improvement science. Improvement projects are often focused at the microsystem level, precluding sufficient data for rigorous and generalizable conclusions. Furthermore, advancements in the field are hampered by the lack of a national research agenda with clearly defined priorities to systematically build knowledge.

Objectives:
The NIH-funded Improvement Science research Network (ISRN) is a national network for improvement and translational science. The initial objective of this developing network was to establish a national research agenda in improvement science.

Methods:
Multiple data sources contributed to the selection of priorities for the national research agenda. A national web-based survey was conducted with stakeholders in quality and patient safety (n=560). An environmental scan of existing research priorities in the field was conducted. Using these data, a consensus-building meeting was held with academic and practice scholars and leaders to determine the priorities for the national research agenda.

Results:
Response to the ISRN survey was deemed as representative of the targeted interprofessional group thought to be leaders in improvement studies. The expert panel deliberations led to development of a national improvement science research agenda. Priorities are focused on Coordination and Transitions of Care, High-Performing Clinical Systems and Microsystems Approaches to Improvement, Integration of Best Practices into Care, and Learning Organizations and Culture of Quality and Safety.

Conclusions:
This represents the first national agenda for the study of improvement strategies. The ISRN is seeking partnerships with academicians and clinicians in acute-care settings to collaborate in improvement studies. The ISRN research agenda will inform the selection of a demonstration project to test the infrastructure for implementing multi-site studies. The results of this multi-site research will advance knowledge translation and ultimately inform policy decisions related to quality improvement.

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