

**OUTCOME FEEDBACK:
AN OPPORTUNITY FOR
QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

To the editor: I read with great interest Lavoie and colleagues' article regarding outcome feedback.¹ I agree with the findings that most emergency physicians would like more outcome feedback. More importantly, as Lavoie states in his editorial,² feedback on the outcomes of our decisions is vital to our becoming experts in our profession.

As a proponent of quality improvement (QI) methodology, I believe it is astounding that we have gone so far, for so long, on so little feedback. It seems emergency medicine as a profession has omitted, often by no fault of our own, the "study" component of QI's Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle. The use of the word "study" in this cycle emphasizes that the purpose of this

phase is to *build new knowledge*.³ I believe that outcome feedback is the "study" component of emergency medicine's improvement cycle. We assess patients (plan), provide treatment and make disposition decisions (do), then repeat this process (act) every day. However, Lavoie and colleagues' research suggests we actively get outcome feedback on our results (study) only 7.5% of the time and passively 10% of the time.

Although the company has recently been in the press for negative reasons, I doubt that Toyota, which based part of its management system on the PDSA cycle,⁴ would have become Canada's leader in auto maker sales rankings⁵ with feedback on only 17.5% of its product.

I hope to see more research in this area to emphasize the importance of this aspect of clinical practice to both our consultant colleagues and ourselves.

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References

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4. Womack J. *The machine that changed the world*. Toronto (ON): Free Press; 1990. p. 291.
5. Keenan G. Toyota Canada wins sales crown. *Globe and Mail Update* 2009 Dec 1. Available: www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/toyota-canada-wins-sales-crown/article1383969 (accessed 2009 Dec. 15).

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