

# 2014 Study: Accountability systems for quality and safety and focus on results

Following the validation of foundational performance drivers in Vizient's 2010 and 2013 studies, the 2014 research focused on gaining a deeper understanding of two specific characteristics identified in the original 2005 study:

- Accountability systems for service, quality, and safety
- Organizational focus on results

This observational study examined **daily leadership and staff behaviors** across the **top 10 academic medical centers** ranked in the Vizient Quality and Accountability study. The research team observed how these two characteristics manifested in practice, providing real-world insights into how high-performing institutions operate.

## Key findings

### 1. Shared ownership beyond executive leadership

A strong sense of shared purpose was observed throughout all organizational levels. Staff beyond the executive team—such as nurses, physicians, and residents—actively participated in leadership forums like the Clinical Executive Committee. This demonstrated a bottom-up and top-down engagement model rooted in humility and mutual respect.

### 2. Measurement, evaluation, and transparency

Top performers maintained clear visibility of goals and priorities across their organizations. There was transparency in how goals were created, communicated, and tracked. Simplified, focused metrics supported sustainability, and cascading communication structures ensured alignment at every level.

### 3. Empowerment of front-line leaders to innovate

Staff at the unit level were empowered to own improvement initiatives, with residents and teams participating in both quality improvement and community-focused problem-solving. This culture of empowerment fostered collaboration, creativity, and individual accountability, all of which directly benefited patient care.

## Conclusion

The 2014 study reinforced the foundational characteristics of top-performing academic medical centers, offering a closer look at how **accountability and results orientation** show up in day-to-day operations. A culture of **shared responsibility, clarity in goals, and empowerment at the front lines** continues to distinguish leading institutions.

These findings further refine the roadmap for health care organizations striving for excellence—demonstrating that performance is not only a product of structure or strategy, but of **deep cultural alignment and operational discipline** at every level.

Learn more about Vizient's work around [top performance](#).