by Alan Wilemon, CHC

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The invasion has been swift, and it has been expansive. In what seems like the blink of an eye, members of the "continuous improvement" horde have infiltrated clinics, hospitals, and health systems across the globe; armed with mystical methodologies, and titles that sound like they are more at home with a board game than a medical practice: Lean Guru, Scrum Master, Agile Purist, Compliance Dynamo… (OK that last one isn't real, but if it catches on, remember, you read it here first.)

All joking aside — have you ever felt the general unfamiliarity and suspicion illustrated above when it came to continuous improvement? Perhaps it was because your first experience with something from the continuous improvement world was just too jarring a shift from your usual operations. Maybe it was because the thoughts and terms you were hearing seemed like a vast amount of new information and you didn't think you had the time to learn so much new material. Or perhaps your distrust of continuous improvement stems from an encounter with one of the previously mentioned invaders, which ended with them acting like they knew everything that was wise and true, and you had nothing to contribute. I'm not painting with a broad brush here, but let's admit it — there are a few of these people out there. If you identify strongly with any of these scenarios, there is really only one thing to say: I'm so sorry. Please allow me to give you the following as an (incredibly basic) olive branch for past wrongdoings from the continuous improvement perspective and show how you can start using some of these tools to your benefit.