

# Perlmutter Cancer Center

An NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center

## All Voices Matter: How a High Reliability Organization (HRO) Program Helps Research Teams Succeed



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### BACKGROUND

A High Reliability Organization program is a cultural approach adopted by teams who **perform complex work** and are motivated by one or more factors to **minimize their tolerance for failure**.

HROs are characterized by an emphasis on **foresight** and frequent **detailed communication** to anticipate and address risks. Clinical research in oncology is a setting with significant complexity (large teams with varied responsibilities, highly detailed protocols, busy clinical environment) as well as compelling factors to minimize risk (patient safety above all else), which led the Perlmutter Cancer Center (PCC) Clinical Trials Office (CTO) to implement an HRO program in 2021.

### GOALS



### SOLUTIONS AND METHODS

Our program is centered around a 20-minute weekly HRO huddle, a videoconference attended by CTO faculty leadership along with the majority (>75%) of our 219 employees. Each huddle begins with a reminder that all voices matter and reinforcement of the five HRO principles: **Preoccupation with Failure, Reluctance to Simplify, Sensitivity to Operations, Commitment to Resilience, and Deference to Expertise**. Huddles include:



An **educational component** such as a policy refresher, crisis-management drill, or training by a subject matter expert



**“Safety stories,”** an open and constructive discussion of recent misses/near-misses, which contributes to an environment where individuals can take accountability without fear of blame or stigma.



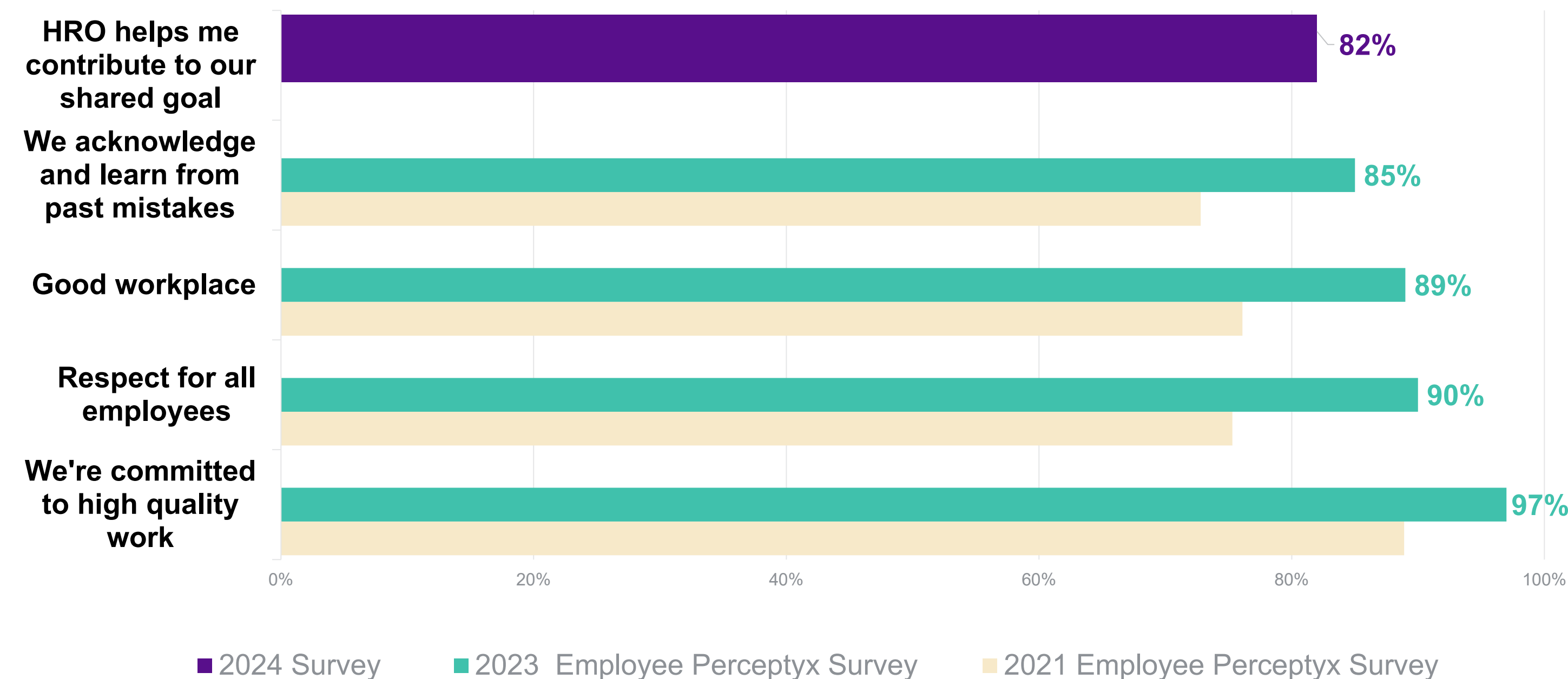
**Shout-outs,** a celebration of our successes. Employees and investigators submit notes of gratitude and praise for one another and we set aside time for these sentiments to be shared among the entire department.

### OUTCOMES

The impact of our HRO culture is reflected by

- Improving **employee engagement** ( +12% in key areas, avg.)
- Exceeding our goal for **patient satisfaction** in 2023 (>96%)
- Sustaining a 60% reduction in **preventable clinical RNI**
- Maintaining 100% **acceptable audit outcomes** with a 50% decrease in major internal audit findings from 2022 to 2023

HRO Programming Helps Research Teams Succeed



### LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

We've learned that focusing on the communication and correction of error helps us grow our capacity for high quality work by creating a space for employees to learn from one another.

Our next step is to review the existing literature on the success of HROs in cancer care and clinical research and to contribute our experience to the academic discourse.



Perlmutter Cancer Center/  
 NYU Langone Website

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