expression "the elephant in the room," a phrase which is used to denote an obvious problem that people are unwilling to discuss or confront. The idea is simple: An elephant in a room would be impossible to miss; thus, the people in the room who are jointly and cooperatively creating the problems have made a collective choice to ignore it.

Some organizations face an apparent dilemma in which employees know the truth about specific problems within the organization yet dare not speak that truth to their superiors. A key factor that fosters the creation of a climate of organizational silence is senior leaders' fears of receiving criticism, especially from subordinates. 1 The unwritten message from the top is "No bad or unpleasant news." Fearing retaliation or speak their minds, subordinates become silent, even if they do speak up, they may discover that their feedback is ignored. Imagine elephants coming with a proverb: "Elephants" have not been studied in any detail by scientists who sufficiently understand their behavior and know how to treat them.

Conclusions

Maxfield and colleagues 3 reported that the actions of top leaders are difficult. Chairs felt the best antidote to ignoring elephants is to support their colleagues even when they were aware of clinical decisions that could harm patients. Said otherwise, organizational silence impairs performance because the information that decision makers receive is distorted. When debate is absent, innovative solutions often do not emerge and groupthink becomes the norm. "The organization is less likely to detect a correct error. When organization leaders do not make course corrections, or when they chart the wrong course, organizational performance suffers." 4

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