5 WAYS TO INCREASE
PATIENT SAFETY

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Contents

Summary

Whether the source is the World Health Organization, Center for Disease Control, or various patient safety initiatives, they confirm steps facilities can take to increase patient safety.

1. Be Consistent:

Getting one step closer to patient safety requires consistency in safety metrics, tools, processes, and structures.

2. Identify and establish safety leaders that educate:

According to the CDC (Center for Disease Control) research shows that when healthcare facilities, care teams, and individual doctors and nurses, are aware of infection problems and take specific steps to prevent them, rates of some targeted Healthcare Associated Infections (HAIs) can decrease by more than 70 percent.[1]

3. Collect feedback from patients:

Simply said, your patients are your customers - and just like other businesses, customer feedback is critical in gaining insight on how to improve and adjust your practices.

4. Allow technology to help:

When designed and implemented well, Health IT can facilitate patient engagement and care coordinated.

5. Wash or sanitize your hands:

According to the CDC, washing or sanitizing your hands is the single most important thing a person can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness to others.

The 5 Ways

1. Be consistent.

What does this mean?

We all know and recognize that consistency is key when working towards a common goal - and when patient safety is the goal, being consistent in these areas will bring you closer:

- **Safety Metrics -** Establishing a set of metrics across your facility (and entire health system) will give you opportunities to identify and measure risks and hazards. When a metric is in place, it stays top of mind.
- **Tools -** Arming your facility (or facilities) with the proper tools - as small as a blood tube label, to as big as an MRI machine - the tools that your staff use should be aligned and also enabling them to do their job safer and more effectively.
- **Processes -** It is absolutely critical to have consistent processes in place - and if your staff needs a reminder of the process, try to over-communicate it - post it on the wall, meet about it, place a metric around it.
- **Structures -** We often hear that facilities or organizations are "restructuring" - what this means is that leaders, departments, or staff are being organized to achieve greater efficiency, profit, or adapting to a changing market. Consistently and effectively restructuring can bring your facility even closer to patient safety.

The 5 Ways

2. Identify and establish safety leaders that educate.

Create a culture that prioritizes safety.

Whether it is on a departmental level, or health system level, a safety leader or advocate should be identified in order to push forth educational programs that increase patient safety.

Research done by the CDC, shows that when healthcare facilities, care teams, individual doctors, and nurses, are aware of infection problems and take specific steps to prevent them, rates of some Healthcare Associated Infections (HAIs) can decrease by more than 70 percent. [1]

Studies have also shown that proper education and training of health care workers and their adoption of best practices such as infection control, hand hygiene, etc., increases compliance. [2]

Other initiatives include joining movements such as the Patient Safety Movement (patientsafetymovement.org), or taking a pledge at United for Patient Safety (unitedforpatientsafety.org).

The 5 Ways

3. Collect feedback from patients

Nobody can tell it better than your patients.

Which is exactly why this initiative is so important. When your patients have a voice, you gain feedback that you would not otherwise know. Here are some tips on how to collect feedback from patients:

• **In-office forms** - have patients fill out a satisfaction just before they leave and include specific questions - "did our staff wash their hands upon entering the room?", "did our staff ask your name, birth date, and address for verification prior to performing any procedure?"

• **Phone surveys** - enlist staff or an outside agency to call patients to ask questions. This may give you more candid answers.

• **Mailed surveys** - this is more costly, but allows patients to answer questions about care at their leisure.

• **Online surveys** - if your facility uses a patient portal, you may have the ability to conduct surveys within the tool.

• **Simply ask them** - During a visit, ask them how their care was and if there is anything you could improve on. You never know what types of answers you can get.

The 5 Ways

4. Allow technology to help.

Technology can be our friend, if treated well.

According to the National Patient Safety Foundation (NPSF), technology has proven potential to improve patient safety, but only if we can reduce risks associated. When technology is designed and implemented well, Health IT can facilitate patient engagement and coordinated care. [3]

The NPSF has also reported that the widespread use of health IT has led to demonstrable reductions in medical errors:

- Computerized physician order entry (CPOE) has been shown to decrease medication errors by about 50% in acute care settings. [4]
- Computerized ordering can drastically reduce dosing errors and known medication allergy errors. [5]
- Electronic medication-administration systems with barcode verification have been shown to reduce medication errors by more than 50% and to eliminate transcription errors. [5]
- Technology has also reduced errors directly related to clinical care, for example with smart pumps and barcoding for transfusion. [6]
- Health IT can also improve patient outcomes; for example, implementation of advanced EHRs has been associated with reductions in mortality among hospitalized patients. [7]

The 5 Ways

5. Wash or sanitize your hands.

Did you know?

According to the WHO, of every 100 hospitalized patients at any given time, 7 in developed and 10 in developing countries will acquire health care-associated infections (HAIs). Hundreds of millions of patients are affected worldwide each year. Simple and low-cost infection prevention and control measures, such as appropriate hand hygiene, can reduce the frequency of HAIs by more than 50%. [10]

Simple Practices Can Cut Infections.

Foam in, foam out. Scrub in, scrub out. Such simple practices, but all too often get missed. According to the Patient Safety Movement, almost 1/3 of all HAIs can be prevented by applying routine hand-washing techniques. [8]

Also, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the single most important thing a person can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness to others is to keep hands clean by hand washing. When washing your hands is not an option, hand sanitizer or waterless hand rub are good alternatives. [1]

Why else wash your hands?

- Most adults have between 2 and 10 million bacteria between their fingertips and elbow [9]
- Germs can stay alive on your hands for up to three hours [9]
- The number of germs on your fingertips doubles after you use the toilet [9]
- Damp hands spread 1,000 times more germs than dry hands [9]
- Germs hide under watches, bracelets and rings [9]

Appendix

1   Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: http://www.cdc.gov/hai/surveillance/)

2   Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). Patient safety and quality: An
        evidence-based handbook for nurses. AHRQ Publication No. 08-0043. Rockville, MD: AHRQ;
        2008 Apr.

        Safdar N, Abad C. Educational interventions for prevention of healthcare-associated infection: A
        systematic review. Crit Care Med. 2008 Mar;36(3):933-40.

        Huang SS, Septimus E, Kleinman K, et al. Targeted versus universal decolonization to prevent
        ICU infection. N Engl J Med. 2013;368:2255-2265.

3   NPSF. Free from Harm: Accelerating Patient Safety Improvement Fifteen Years after
        To Err Is Human, 2015

4   Bates et al. 1998, Radley et al. 2013

5   Poon et al. 2010

6   Fanikos et al. 2007, Askeland et al. 2009

7   Amarasignham et al. 2009, Parente and McCullough 2009, Banger and Graber 2015

8   http://patientsafetymovement.org

9   St. Mary Healthcare: http://www.stmaryhealthcare.org/WhyToWashYourHands

10   World Health Organization: http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/patient_safety/en/

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