

Patient Safety:

Important for Business & Employees

Healthcare's focus on Patient Safety is a recent initiative – since the 1990's – and the emphasis is on reporting, analysis and prevention of adverse healthcare events. Many patient safety initiatives in healthcare are modeled after non-healthcare industry and business safety practices, such as those undertaken by the airline and military industries. Safety lessons learned from these two industries include the need to advance technology, the need for education of the public and those in the industry, the need for improved information hand-offs, and the value of financial incentives.

Causes of errors in the healthcare setting, as is the case in the military and airline industry, can be attributed to several factors, including:

- Human factors (variations in training & experience; unfamiliar settings or time pressures; complicated technologies)
- Systems failures (communications failures; reliance on automated systems)
- Common misconceptions about adverse events (that “bad apples” or incompetent staff lead to most errors ; if a complication occurs, it must be a result of an “error”)

Elimination of errors can yield measurable results for any business. The FOUR top reasons your business and your employees should be concerned with patient safety are:

1 You and employees are being asked to pay a larger share of the cost of healthcare. Unsatisfactory outcomes lead to law suits, which drives medical malpractice costs. In many regions of the US, higher malpractice costs have resulted in decreasing availability of physician specialists, forcing those who need care to travel longer distances to seek appropriate healthcare. According to the Midwest Business Group on Health (2002), preventable medical errors drive up US healthcare costs by as much as \$29 billion annually. In 2004 U.S. healthcare costs increased 7.9%, three times the rate of inflation. Businesses must pay higher insurance premiums, face more lost work days and decreased employee satisfaction.

2 Scientifically established (or evidence-based) practices that improve outcomes and patient safety are being reported and are being adopted by healthcare providers. Efficient care and improved outcomes maximize limited healthcare resources through reduced hospital lengths of stay, decreased costs, and improved customer satisfaction.

3 A focus on prevention of errors and safer patient care translates to healthier workers, improved productivity in the workplace, improved satisfaction with health benefits, and less lost time and lost revenue for businesses. Encouraging your employees to be active partners in their healthcare improves their likelihood of staying safe – good for employees and good for business.

4 Long term, it is anticipated that many of the initiatives developed by organizations that promote patient safety and healthcare quality will improve efficiency and lower healthcare costs nationwide – good for all of us.



Focus on Prevention

A common event related to patient safety, is a healthcare-associated infection (HAI). The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) generally identifies it as an infection that patients acquire during the course of receiving treatment for other conditions or that healthcare workers acquire while performing their duties within a healthcare setting. In U.S. hospitals alone, the CDC estimates that HAIs account for an estimated 2 million infections, 90,000 deaths, and \$4.5 billion in excess of healthcare costs annually.

Inexpensive changes to healthcare practice can decrease the likelihood that a patient will acquire an infection, thus improving patient safety, improving quality of care for patients, and improving access to services for healthcare consumers. Examples of inexpensive changes in practice are: frequent hand washing, timing of anti-biotic medications, adherence to established clinical guidelines for diseases, expanded consumer education and empowerment.

From “Bad Apples” to “Imperfect Systems”

Move from A Culture of Blame to a “Just” Culture

In 2001, The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services research arm, published a study – Making Healthcare Safer - A Critical Analysis of Patient Safety Practices – that focused on improving processes, not finger-pointing at individuals. This allows an organization to “emphasize changing the system to make it safer rather than targeting and removing individual bad apples.” They recognize that when “individuals repeatedly perform poorly and are unresponsive to education and remediation, action is necessary.” Almost all patient safety experts agree that focusing on systemic change is more productive than an emphasis on finding and punishing poor performers.

In a “Just” culture, the trick is recognizing the difference between human error and negligent conduct/intentional violation of rules- not a totally “blame-free” culture, but a “just” one. A “just” culture balances individual accountability and responsibility with support of non-punitive action so that the system may learn from near-misses and preventable medical mistakes.

The AHRQ study went on to say “Most errors are made by good but fallible people working in dysfunctional systems, which means that making care safer depends on buttressing

the system to prevent or catch the inevitable lapses of mortals. This logical approach is common in other complex, high-tech industries, but it has been woefully ignored in medicine. Instead, we have steadfastly clung to the view that an error is a moral failure by an individual, a posture that has left patients feeling angry and ready to blame, and providers feeling guilty and demoralized. Most importantly, it hasn’t done a damn thing to make healthcare safer.”

It’s a Team Sport

Everybody has a role to play, from the executive to the front-line worker. Any improvements in patient safety require commitment, involvement and empowerment on all levels. Some basic principles include:

- Communicate, communicate, communicate - frequently and at all levels.
- Promote open reporting of near-misses and errors by staff without fear of blame.
- Work together. People form natural teams when they come together to solve problems and enact change.
- Provide training on accountability, change management, and disclosure of outcomes principles.

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Premium Assistance health coverage is now available for children and pregnant women who are uninsured, but not eligible for Medicaid coverage due to income. "Premium Assistance is an Insure New Mexico! Solution to expand children's health care coverage," said Secretary Pamela Hyde. "Uninsured children up to age 12, and even up to age 18 with a sibling 12 or younger, and pregnant women who are currently without maternity coverage can get health care coverage through this program."

During the 2006 "Year of the Child" legislative session, Governor Bill Richardson recommended state funding for Premium Assistance for Kids (PAK) and Premium Assistance for Maternity (PAM). The legislature passed and the Governor approved \$2.7 million to get the program up and running.

"This is another public/private program that will help more uninsured children get the health care coverage they need," said Hyde. For the PAK program, the state pays a portion of the monthly premium, generally 50%, while the parent pays the remainder and all deductibles and co-payments. Premiums are determined based on the child's age, gender and geographic location and range from \$62 to \$150 per month.

The PAK benefit package includes preventive; primary and specialty care; inpatient and outpatient hospitalization; pharmacy; lab; x-ray; and physical, occupational and speech therapy. A child's eligibility for PAK must be determined every 12 months.

The PAM program covers only pregnancy-related services. The patient pays a one-time premium fee per pregnancy depending on the trimester in which she enrolls. For example, if the client enrolls during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy (months one-five) the premium is \$150. However, if the client enrolls during the second 20 weeks of pregnancy (months six-nine), the premium is \$300.

"The difference in the premium cost is to encourage pregnant women to start receiving health care services early in the pregnancy, ensuring healthier births," said Carolyn Ingram, Medical Assistance Division Director. In addition, there are no deductibles or co-payments for the PAM program, and the client uses Medicaid fee-for-service providers.

People interested in learning more about the PAK and PAM programs and how to enroll are urged to call the Insure New Mexico! Solutions Center at 1-866-901-4538 or the Income Support Division centralized unit at 1-866-765-4148.



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Simple Steps to Reduce Your Risk of Infection

- 1.** Cover your sneeze or cough – and ask others to do the same
 - Turn away from other people before coughing or sneezing.
 - Cover your mouth or nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze; discard the tissue in the trash.
 - If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
 - Always clean your hands after coughing or sneezing.
- 2.** Clean your Hands:
 - Whenever your hands are visibly dirty
 - Before you eat, and before touching your mouth, nose or eyes
 - Before and after preparing food
 - After contact with blood or body fluids, using the restroom, touching animals and pets, or changing diapers
- 3.** Never share personal items: toothbrushes, combs, drinking glasses, utensils, razor blades, face cloths and bath towels - germs can be passed from person to person on these personal items.
- 4.** Disinfect Germ "Hot-Spots"
 - Follow the directions on disinfectant labels to maximize benefits. Products such as alcohol-based hand rubs and sprays/wipes that are labeled "disinfectant" are designed to kill a broad spectrum of harmful bacteria and viruses that other cleaners cannot. Let the disinfectant do its job; many products take several minutes (for most 10 minutes) to fully disinfect an area.
 - Use a clean, dry cloth or paper towel to clean and dry all surfaces. Wiping surfaces with a dirty dishcloth, sponge, or towel will only spread germs.
- 5.** STAY HOME - If you have a fever, you are probably contagious. Don't go to work, avoid malls or other crowded places if there is a flu outbreak in the community
- 6.** Get Your Annual Influenza Vaccine
- 7.** Care for any wounds:
 - Clean your hands before and after changing wound dressings (wear gloves to change dressings if recommended by your doctor).
 - Take special care with IV lines or other medical devices inserted into the body. If you must touch them, clean your hands first.
 - Follow any specific instructions from your doctor for care of your wounds.
- 8.** Follow the doctor's orders if you are taking antibiotics
 - Take the medication as directed on the bottle and take all of the medication - do not share antibiotics or save some for the next time you get sick.
- 9.** In the doctor's office or the hospital:
 - Ask the staff to clean their hands before treating you and ask visitors to clean their hands also.
 - Before your doctor uses a stethoscope to listen to your chest, ask that the diaphragm (or flat surface of the stethoscope) be wiped with alcohol.
 - Stop smoking well in advance of any surgery (and consider stopping permanently!).
 - Ask staff and your doctor about keeping you warm during surgery.
 - Ask staff to limit the number of people visiting you.
 - Ask others not to visit you in the hospital if they have an infection.
- 10.** Don't visit others in the hospital if you have a cold or other infection
- 11.** Don't take young children to visit in the hospital. You'll want to protect children from any germs around the hospital, and protect patients from germs the child may be carrying.

Proper Hand Washing

Use soap and plenty of running water if your hands are visibly soiled:

- Wet hands with warm water and work soap into a lather.

- Rub your hands vigorously for 15 seconds or longer; get in between fingers and scrub wrists.
- Rinse your hands with warm running water and pat them dry with a clean towel.



- Use a clean paper towel to turn off the water faucet and discard it in a trash can.

Proper Use of Hand Sanitizers

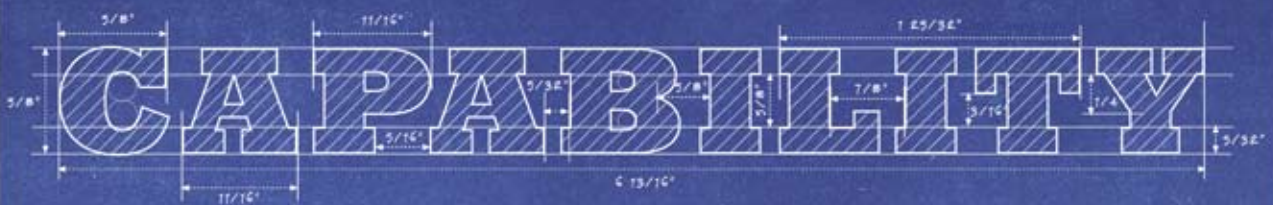
Use a hand sanitizer only if your hands aren't visibly dirty:

- Apply the hand sanitizer to the palm

- of one hand.
- Rub your hands together until they're dry; make sure every spot on your hands and fingers is covered.
- It should take about 15 seconds to rub your hands dry. If not, you didn't apply enough hand sanitizer.



Skip the traditional handshake greeting – if you're uncomfortable, explain that you are concerned about transmitting germs – or go for the younger generation "knuckle handshake", or "DAP". Avoid the traditional handshake, even though doing so may be uncomfortable – express your concern about passing on germs to ease your personal discomfort.



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12 Tips to Prevent Cold and Flu the “Natural” Way

There are no known cures for colds and flu, so cold and flu prevention should be your goal. A proactive approach to warding off colds and flu is apt to make your whole life healthier. The most effective way for preventing the flu is to get the flu shot. It may not be natural, but it works better than anything else. But there are other strategies you can employ as well. WebMD went to Charles B. Inlander, president of The People’s Medical Society, for suggestions you may want to try:

#1 Wash Your Hands

Most cold and flu viruses are spread by direct contact. Someone who has the flu sneezes onto their hand, and then touches the telephone, the keyboard, a kitchen glass. The



germs can live for hours – in some cases weeks – only to be picked up by the next person who touches the same object. So wash your hands often. If

no sink is available, rub your hands together very hard for a minute or so. That also helps break up most of the cold germs.

#2 Don’t Cover Your Sneezes and Coughs With Your Hands

Because germs and viruses cling to your bare hands, muffling coughs and sneezes with your hands results in passing along your germs to others. When you feel a sneeze or cough coming, use a tissue, then throw it away immediately. If you don’t have a tissue, turn your head away from people near you and cough into the air.



#3 Don’t Touch Your Face

Cold and flu viruses enter your body through the eyes, nose, or mouth. Touching their faces is the major way children catch colds, and a key way they pass colds on to their parents.

#4 Drink Plenty of Fluids

Water flushes your system, washing out the poisons as it rehydrates you. A typical, healthy adult needs eight 8-ounce glasses of fluids each day. How can you tell if you’re getting enough liquid? If the color of your urine runs close to clear, you’re getting enough. If it’s deep yellow, you need more fluids.



#5 Take a Sauna

Researchers aren’t clear about the exact role saunas play in prevention, but one 1989 German study found that people who steamed twice a week got half as many colds as those who didn’t. One theory: When you take a sauna you inhale air hotter than 80 degrees, a temperature too hot for cold and flu viruses to survive.

#6 Get Fresh Air

A regular dose of fresh air is important, especially in cold weather when central heating dries you out and makes your body more vulnerable to cold and flu viruses. Also, during cold weather more people stay indoors, which means more germs are circulating in crowded, dry rooms.



#7 Do Aerobic Exercise Regularly

Aerobic exercise speeds up the heart to pump larger quantities of blood; makes you breathe faster to help transfer oxygen from your lungs to your blood; and makes you sweat once your body heats up. These exercises help increase the body's natural virus-killing cells.



#8 Eat Foods Containing Phytochemicals

"Phyto" means plants, and the natural chemicals in plants give the vitamins in food a supercharged boost. So put away the vitamin pill, and eat dark green, red, and yellow vegetables and fruits.



#9 Eat Yogurt

Some studies have shown that eating a daily cup of low-fat yogurt can reduce your susceptibility to colds by 25 percent. Researchers think the beneficial bacteria in yogurt may stimulate production of immune system substances that fight disease.



#10 Don't Smoke

Statistics show that heavy smokers get more severe colds and more frequent ones.



Even being around smoke profoundly zaps the immune system. Smoke dries out your nasal passages and paralyzes cilia. These are the delicate hairs that

line the mucous membranes in your nose and lungs, and

with their wavy movements, sweep cold and flu viruses out of the nasal passages. Experts contend that one cigarette can paralyze cilia for as long as 30 to 40 minutes.

#11 Cut Alcohol Consumption

Heavy alcohol use destroys the liver, the body's primary filtering system, which means that germs of all kinds won't leave your body as fast. The result is, heavier drinkers are more prone to initial infections as well as secondary complications. Alcohol also dehydrates the body – it actually takes more fluids from your system than it puts in.



#12 Relax

If you can teach yourself to relax, you can activate your immune system on demand. There's evidence that when you put your relaxation skills into action, your interleukins – leaders in



the immune system response against cold and flu viruses – increase in the bloodstream. Train yourself to picture an image you find pleasant or calming. Do this 30 minutes a day for several months. Keep in

mind, relaxation is a learnable skill, but it is not doing nothing. People who try to relax, but are in fact bored, show no changes in blood chemicals.

— From 2005 WebMD, Cold & Flu Center

Hospitals Voluntarily Reporting Infection Prevention Measures, Quality of Care Measures and More

The New Mexico Hospital Association (NMHA), on behalf of its hospital membership, has made "report card" information available to the public through its website www.nmhhsa.org, at NMCheckPoint. Hospitals are voluntarily reporting their performance on 2 measures that show how hospitals are doing in taking steps to reduce hospital-acquired infections. The two measures being reported show how often hospitals are giving surgical patients an antibiotic within one hour prior to surgical incision and how often the antibiotic is discontinued within 24 hours after surgery end

time (or 48 hours for cardiac surgeries). These measures have been clinically proven to reduce hospital-acquired infections in surgical patients.

Additional measures related to the quality of care given to patients with heart attacks, pneumonia and heart failure are also reported on the website. Research has shown that if a hospital takes these steps in treatment, it provides the best results for patients. These 16 quality-of-care measures can be viewed at NMCheckPoint on the NMHA website.

Consumers can also view information about hospital charges and utilization on the NMHA website, at NMPri-

cePoint. Another link on the NMHA website contains information about hospitals' average annual price increases. All of this information has been made available to the public over the last 12 months as part of the NMHA voluntary hospital public reporting initiative. New Mexicans can expect enhancements to this reporting in the future, as hospitals work to share more information with the public.

"Providing quality care and achieving the best possible outcome for patients are top priorities for New Mexico's hospitals. Our hospitals work hard to monitor and measure the level of care they provide and continually work to make improvements," said Jeff Dye, President and CEO of NMHA. New Mexicans should be proud of their hospitals for voluntarily sharing what amounts to their 'report cards' related to Infection Prevention performance in an effort to inform the public. This demonstrates their commitment to open and honest communications, and that's what the public wants and deserves."

— *Caryn Relkin*



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New Mexico Hospital Association Patient Safety Initiative

In October, 2006, NMHA initiated a new clinical patient safety program for member hospitals. Led by Ellen Interlandi, RN, MHM, CNA, goals of this initiative are :

1. Increase awareness of existing patient safety activities in hospitals;
2. Promote patient safety practice improvements, promote a culture and mindset that advances patient safety;
3. Promote resource sharing among hospitals
4. Develop and provide tools for providers and consumers regarding patient safety issues
5. Continue the Institute for Healthcare Improvement 5 Million Lives effort in collaboration with New Mexico Medical Review Association;
6. Improve hospitals' understanding of patient safety initiatives and the recommendations for actions by patient safety leader organizations;

Activities to date include:

- site visits to hospitals to increase awareness of the program and perform patient safety needs assessments
- exploration of standardized colored "ALERT" wristbands in the state
- education for clinical Patient Safety Officers

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Improve Your Own Health Literacy To Have a Safe Healthcare Experience

1. Seek information about illnesses or conditions that affect you.

2. Ask questions of your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or benefit plan coordinator if you do not understand something.

3. Write down your medical history including any medical conditions you have, illnesses, immunizations, allergies, all medications and dietary supplements you're taking (see *Become a Partner in Your Healthcare.*)

4. If you are scheduled to have any tests, make sure

the facility has your name and other identifying information is correct, and the test is the one your healthcare provider ordered. If you have any doubts, speak up. It's ok to ask.

5. Involve a family member or friend in your care if you're not able to participate fully. They can accompany you on appointments, help you ask questions, and understand care instructions.

6. In the hospital, when you are offered medication ask what the name of the medication is and what it is for. If the medication is not to treat the problems that brought you to the hospital, ask your nurse to check why the medication was ordered before you begin taking it.

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Business can Help Stop Germs at Work

1. Provide disinfectant cleaners for GERM "HOT SPOTS"

- Promote the use of disinfectants on commonly touched hard surfaces like countertops, door handles, sinks, tabletops, phones, TV remotes and baby changing tables. Remind employees if they share a telephone or keyboard at work, to use a disinfectant towelette to wipe the surface a few times during the work day.
- Encourage following the directions on disinfectant labels to maximize benefits. Products such as sprays/wipes that are labeled "disinfectant" are designed to kill a broad spectrum of harmful bacteria and viruses that other cleaners cannot. Encourage the use of a clean, dry cloth or



paper towel to clean and dry all surfaces. Wiping surfaces with a dirty dishcloth, sponge, or towel will only spread germs.

- Supply alcohol-based hand rubs or gel sanitizers near bathrooms and lunchrooms. Post signs to encourage their use.

2. Offer Annual Influenza Vaccines to employees and families.

3. Consider ways to offer flexible work schedules that will allow employees to stay home when they are ill.

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Clear Communication Between Patients and Healthcare Providers is Critical

The Partnership for Clear Health Communication™ (www.askme3.org) has developed a tool to improve health literacy with the ASK ME 3™ TIPS



To remind yourself what you need to do and the questions you can ask at your next medical visit:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do this?

Here are a few tips you can try:

- I will ask the 3 questions.
- I will bring a friend or family member to help me at my doctor visit.
- I will make a list of my health concerns to tell my doctor or nurse.
- I will bring a list of all my medicines when I visit my doctor or nurse
- I will ask my pharmacist for help when I have questions about my medicines

What If I Ask and Still Don't Understand?

- Let your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist know if you still don't understand what you need to do.
- You might say, "This is new to me. Will you please explain that to me one more time?"

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Who We Are

The New Mexico Hospital Association is the non-profit trade organization representing 41 non-federal hospitals in the state.

Our mission is to work with others to improve the health status of the citizens of New Mexico.

— Jeff Dye, President and Chief Executive Officer

New Mexico Hospital Association Members

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Artesia General Hospital, *Artesia*
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Cibola General Hospital, *Grants*
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Socorro General Hospital, *Socorro*
St. Vincent Regional Medical Center,
Santa Fe
Trigg (Dr. Dan C.) Memorial Hospital,
Tucumcari
Union County General Hospital,
Clayton
University of New Mexico Hospital,
Albuquerque

Tips and Information About How You Can Be Involved in Safe Patient Care

US Dept of Veteran's Affairs-Patient Safety
<http://www.patientsafety.gov/patients.html>

National Patient Safety Foundation
<http://npsf.org>

The Partnership for Clear Health Communication™
www.askme3.org

Association for Professionals in Infection Control
<http://www.apic.org/scriptcontent/custom/piorg/education/defa>

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
<http://www.ahrq.gov/>

Institute for Safe Medicine Practices
<http://www.ismp.org/default.asp>

Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI)
<http://www.ihl.org/ihl>

New Mexico Medical Review Association (NMMRA)
<http://www.nmmra.org>

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