Patient Safety Talking Points & Resources

TALKING POINTS

Hospitals and health systems are continuously dedicated to patient safety and delivering high-quality and equitable care to all their patients.
  o While even one incident of preventable harm or medical error is one too many, hospitals and health systems continuously seek to achieve the best possible outcomes for all.
  o They build processes and implement policies to reduce safety issues and reliably deliver appropriate, high-quality care.

Health care workers' crucial life-saving roles have never been more evident, which is why their engagement, safety, protection, and well-being remain our top priority.
  o Hospitals have worked to foster cultures of safety that empower their workforces to identify and share potential patient and workforce safety issues so they can be addressed and prevented in the future. [SHARE EXAMPLES OF HOW STAFF INPUT LED TO SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS]
  o In addition, hospitals and health care systems have long had robust protocols in place to detect and deter violence against their staff. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, violence against hospital employees has increased.
  o This is why we have implemented [INCLUDE EXAMPLES FROM YOUR HOSPITAL] to protect our workers.

Hospitals and health systems have been transparent about sharing their progress in improving quality and safety. Over 15 years ago, they led the way in developing transparent reporting of quality and patient safety data and helped create [Hospital Compare (now Care Compare)](), a website where consumers can find information about hospital quality.

Over the past decade, our field has made **bold changes to improve care quality and safety**. Hospitals also have worked to ensure all patients benefit from these improvements by **identifying and reducing disparities in care**. [INCLUDE EXAMPLES FROM YOUR HOSPITAL]

However, the **once-in-a-century COVID-19 pandemic made it more challenging for hospitals and health systems to continue their quality improvement gains.**

The COVID-19 pandemic put unprecedented strain on our hospitals, health systems and caregivers in a variety of ways and made our health care delivery system look very different over the last three to four years. Hospitals and health systems had to:
  o balance caring for an influx of COVID-19 patients while keeping the doors open to all others needing care;

- o treat sicker patients (both with COVID-19 and without) who often had to spend longer periods of time in the hospital;
- o operate with sometimes critical workforce shortages;
- o contend with extraordinary worldwide shortages in supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE);
- o temporarily expand capacity to meet critical treatment needs; and
- o confront numerous challenges outside the control of hospitals and health systems.

While the pandemic made our work more challenging, **one thing remains constant for America's hospitals and health systems: We are committed to providing patients with high-quality, safe, effective, equitable and person-centered care.** That's why, to give a few examples, hospitals and health systems are working hard to:
- o further reduce healthcare-associated infections;
- o improve communication among providers and between the patient and caregivers, especially during care transitions;
- o include diverse patient voices in hospital processes and procedures;
- o appropriately use opioids to protect patients from potential addiction;
- o use antibiotics judiciously to preserve their effectiveness against deadly diseases;
- o leverage data and analytics to predict trends in patient safety and care opportunities to prevent errors before they happen;
- o engage clinicians even further in performance improvement and reducing inappropriate clinical variation;
- o further help the field connect quality and safety efforts to equity of care; and
- o make sure women have safe pregnancies and childbirths, from the first days of pregnancy through the postpartum period.

The hospital field is united in re-doubling our efforts to improve quality and reduce health disparities. [INCLUDE EXAMPLES FROM YOUR HOSPITAL]

AHA RESOURCES

The AHA has worked with hospitals and health systems to share tools that help build a culture of patient safety, adopt best practices around infection prevention and other critical safety topics, and share learnings so that hospitals can learn from each other's experiences in improving safety. Examples include:

AHA infection control and prevention resources

Project Firstline, which offers hospitals and health systems the tools and resources needed to engage all stakeholders on infection control – from bedside nurses to administrators to environmental staff – to identify areas of improvement, commit to an action plan, monitor practices, and adjust as needed.

Team Training, which is designed to improve teamwork skills and practices that are essential to delivering safe, coordinated care.

Living Learning Network, is a 24/7 online community which provides an excellent opportunity for hospitals to share immediate needs and successful strategies in real-time in response to COVID-19 and overall patient safety to increase the quality of care.

Age Friendly Health Systems, which is a multidisciplinary project aimed at addressing the particular needs and concerns, including safety concerns, in caring for older patients.

Palliative Care strategies to help patients living with serious illnesses not only manage their symptoms and pain, but also set health goals, stay on track to meet those goals and live their best lives.

STRIVE (States Targeting Reduction in Infections via Engagement), which was a national initiative funded by the CDC and aimed at improving infection control practices and strengthening health care-associated infection prevention stakeholder relationships at the local level.

AHA Quest for Quality prize, which honors hospitals and health systems that have made extraordinary improvements in the delivery of safe, high-quality care and seeks to share their strategies with other hospitals that seek to improve quality.

Hospitals Against Violence (HAV), an AHA initiative to share examples and best practices with the field, with a particular emphasis on workplace violence prevention.

OTHER RESOURCES

AHRQ toolkits for preventing CLABSI and CAUTI

AHRQ communication and optimal resolution (CANDOR) toolkit, which provides strategies and training for clinicians to use in discussing safety events with patients and families.

APIC HAI cost calculator tools

FURTHER QUESTIONS

If you have further questions about patient safety policy, please contact Nancy Foster, AHA's vice president for quality and patient safety, at nfoster@aha.org or Akin Demehin, AHA's senior director for quality and patient safety, at ademehin@aha.org.

If you have communications or media-related questions, please contact Sharon Cohen, AHA's senior associate director of media relations, at scohen@aha.org.