

Ensuring the Highest Standards of Patient Safety and Quality Care: A Daily Mission for Connecticut Hospitals

The number one priority for Connecticut hospitals is ensuring patient safety and delivering the highest quality of care. Patients and their families depend on our hospitals to deliver outstanding care under the safest possible conditions.

Hospitals in Connecticut are constantly reviewing and improving procedures, implementing best practices, and learning from each other and leading authorities on patient care and safety. Promoting a culture of safety and continuous quality improvement helps ensure the best possible outcomes for patients in Connecticut's not-for-profit hospitals.

Statewide Clinical Collaboratives Improve Patient Safety

Connecticut hospitals are among the best in the nation, aided by a willingness to share information about patient safety and quality initiatives. Hospitals do this in part through clinical “collaboratives” – which, as the name implies, provide an opportunity to collaborate on important areas of patient care delivery. Through data collection, “rapid cycle” and “small tests of change” techniques, educational conferences, conference calls, and ListServes, staff from hospitals throughout the state share information on successes and best practice. Coordinated through the Connecticut Hospital Association, hospital clinical collaboratives have yielded impressive results:

- Hospital-acquired pressure ulcers (bed sores) have been dramatically reduced as a result of the CHA's pressure ulcer collaborative. Twenty-five hospitals and 169 team members participated.
- Multiple-drug resistant organism (MDRO) hospital-acquired infections have been reduced at hospitals participating in CHA's MDRO collaborative. Qualidigm, Connecticut's Quality Improvement Organization and a partner in CHA's clinical collaboratives, has now taken the lead on the MDRO collaborative, focusing on education regarding the reduction of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (commonly called MRSA).
- Patient falls, a persistent cause of injury in hospitals, is the focus of a collaborative, launched in 2009, with 23 hospitals and 150 team members participating with the goal of significantly reducing the number of falls by hospital patients.
- The newest CHA collaborative is Reducing Heart Failure Readmissions, aimed at reducing readmissions through improving and standardizing the processes related to the care of the heart failure patient. The collaborative helps participating organizations standardize processes related to: providing evidence-based care to patients with heart failure; enhancing the admission assessment for post-discharge needs; engaging patients and their families as active partners in care; patient and family-centered hand-off communication; medication reconciliation, adherence and safety; and post-acute care follow-up.

National Quality and Patient Safety Initiatives

Over three-quarters of Connecticut's hospitals are participating in the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's 5 Million Lives campaign to reduce harm and preventable deaths in U.S. hospitals. Most Connecticut hospitals are involved in several of the wide variety of IHI initiatives, including:

- Preventing central line infections
- Reducing MRSA
- Preventing pressure ulcers
- Preventing ventilator-associated pneumonia
- Deploying rapid response teams for early intervention
- Reducing surgical complications
- Preventing harm from “high alert” medications
- Improving medication reconciliation

Connecticut hospitals are currently working through CHA on a national StopBSI project to eliminate central line blood stream infections and improve teamwork and communications in the intensive care unit. ICU teams from 14 hospitals have committed to this two-year project developed by the Health Research and Educational Trust (HRET) in conjunction with The Johns Hopkins University Quality and Safety Research Group and the Michigan Health & Hospital Association Keystone Center for Patient Safety and Quality.

In the spring of 2009, Connecticut hospitals through CHA launched the World Health Organization's Surgical Safety Checklist. The 19-item checklist is designed to improve team communication and consistency of care leading to reduced complications and deaths associated with surgery.

Monitoring Quality and Patient Safety

All Connecticut hospitals measure and monitor quality and patient safety indicators. Quality measures are publicly reported and are available on the CHA website at www.cthosp.org.

Connecticut hospitals are accredited through The Joint Commission, an independent, not-for-profit monitoring organization, by meeting specific standards in patient safety as detailed in the Commission's National Patient Safety Goals.

Extensive Quality and Patient Safety Education

Since 2003, CHA has been proud to offer an educational summit for healthcare leaders focused on the topic of quality and patient safety. Co-hosted by Qualidigm, experts from around the globe have shared the science and improvement strategies known to improve quality and patient safety. Over the years, the Summit has hosted internationally recognized leaders such as Lucian Leape, Robert Wachter, David Marx, and James Bagian. Patient advocates such as Sorrel King and Linda Kenney have shared their difficult and compelling stories. In response, many hospitals have incorporated patient and family advocates into their quality and patient safety committees and advisory boards in effort to keep the "patient's voice" present when decisions get made. A patient-centered care philosophy is deeply ingrained in the culture of our hospitals.

CHA Quality Institute

CHA's Quality Institute offered a broad series of education curricula to provide Connecticut hospitals with the skills needed to drive quality and patient safety improvements throughout their organizations. Designed for a variety of audiences, from senior leaders to front-line caregivers, Quality Institute programs offered up-to-date information on successful strategies, tools, and techniques to make lasting change in quality improvement and patient safety. Some recent programs have focused on the basics of quality care, quality and patient safety for senior leaders, process improvement tools, and communications tools.

Helping the Public Make Informed Decisions

- CHA's Quality and Patient Safety Information for Patients and Families website provides easy-to-use information about the quality of hospital care in Connecticut (www.cthosp.org).
- Connecticut hospitals report infection rates to the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH).
- Connecticut hospitals identify and report serious events to DPH, which summarizes the information and publishes an annual report.
- The Hospital Compare website, sponsored by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, publishes 25 quality measures submitted quarterly by every Connecticut hospital.

