



HOGAN



Safety
Report

First, Do No Harm

Three Steps to Improving Patient Safety

An Institute of Medicine study estimated that preventable medical errors are responsible for more than 98,000 deaths a year in the United States, surpassed only by heart disease and cancer.

Although most reputable healthcare organizations have adopted organizationwide systems and practices to improve patient safety, the personality and behaviors of individual caregivers are often overlooked. Following are three steps to help healthcare providers improve patient safety.

1. Start with Staff

Every employee — hospital administrators, doctors, nurses, janitors, and everyone in between — plays a vital role in improving patient safety. However, in a 2013 report from insurance provider AIG, 52% of C-suite executives and 51% of hospital risk managers said that nursing and clinical staff bear the brunt of the responsibility for patient safety.

Obviously, medical personnel should have the proper training and technical skills to perform their jobs. But should those be the only criteria? Nursing and clinical staff face demanding work environments:

Long hours - According to an article in the *American Journal of Nursing*, nurses who worked 12.5 hours or longer were more likely to make errors.

Excessive patient loads - In the AIG survey, 40% of hospital administrators said their inpatient load exceeded safe levels at least once a month, and 36% reported having an unsafe workload at least weekly.

High turnover - According to a report by hospital staffing agency Nursing Solutions Inc., the average turnover among medical staff is currently 14.7%, up from 13.5% in 2012.

When it comes to performing in such a high-stakes atmosphere, all applicants are not created equal. Our research shows that there are six personality-based competencies that accurately predict an individual's ability to perform his or her job safely:

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Compliant - High scorers conform to organizational guidelines and are less likely to ignore rules.

Strong - High scorers exhibit confidence in their work and are less likely to make mistakes due to panicking under pressure.

Poised - High scorers display emotional control while working and are less likely to lose their temper and make a mistake.

Vigilant - High scorers remain attentive during repetitive tasks and are less likely to make mistakes due to boredom.

Cautious - High scorers tend to perform work carefully and avoid unnecessary risk.

Trainable - High scorers are open to new training and development and are less likely to overestimate their own competence.

2. Change the Culture

According to AIG's survey, negative organizational culture is the number one barrier to patient safety. In fact, one-third of the C-suite respondents said the culture at their hospitals needed to undergo major change. Organizational culture impacts patient safety in three main ways.

Staff buy-in - Nurses and clinical staff bear the greatest responsibility for patient safety and are most familiar with the countless risks patients face. The constantly evolving nature of safety best practices makes it necessary to continually institute new procedures. However, top-down patient safety initiatives aren't likely to be well received.

"Simply announcing new initiatives will be met with resistance," said Christopher Duffy, Hogan partner and director of global solutions. "It needs to be a two-way conversation to ensure understanding and gain commitment."

Communication breakdown - According to the AIG study, three-quarters of risk managers listed lack of staff communication and teamwork as their top barrier to maintaining patient safety, as did 68% of hospital executives. To make matters worse, this is an issue that becomes compounded every time a patient is moved or transferred between departments (e.g., from surgery to recovery).

"This is all about communication," says Duffy. "After a long shift, do nurses see it as 'My job is over; it's time to go home,' or do they say, 'I really need to transition and follow the proper steps to make sure the patient is as safe as possible'?"

Compliance versus commitment - What happens when a mistake is made? According to a report from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 54% of hospital workers said that when an accident was reported, management was more interested in doling out discipline than getting to the root of the problem.

"This is as much about leadership as it is about safety," Duffy said. "Are you after compliance, or are you after commitment? The research out there is pretty clear that a culture of compliance breeds more problems. You can have a much higher-performing, higher-functioning team environment if everyone is committed to the same goals."

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3. People Over Profits

Creating and maintaining a successful culture of safety requires leaders to understand and manage employees' perceptions at all levels of an organization, starting at the top.

According to AIG, only 2% of C-suite executives consider maximizing financial sustainability their highest priority, a sharp contrast to the 64% who said maximizing patient safety was number one. However, the same group said 16% of their time was devoted to maximizing financial sustainability, and only 33% was devoted to patient safety efforts.

The disconnect between what hospital administrators say and what they do communicates to hospital staff that although patient safety is important, it takes a backseat to financial sustainability. To be fair, capital plays a major role in maintaining quality patient care. If a medical institution can't offer competitive pay, keep facilities up to date, and continually upgrade equipment, maintaining patient safety is unlikely. Indeed, 72% of C-suite executives cited maximizing financial sustainability as a primary challenge to safeguarding patient safety.

Fortunately, these goals aren't mutually exclusive. "Considering nearly half of every dollar spent on healthcare costs is related to a medical error, improvements in patient safety will provide a quick return on investment," said Emily Rinehart, a registered nurse and vice president and division manager for healthcare risk consulting at AIG.

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Hogan's Approach

Based on more than 30 years of research and innovation, Hogan's Safety Report consists of three components that help healthcare providers hire safety-conscious employees, prioritize patient safety, and improve the quality of patient care.

1. **The Safety Climate Survey** provides critical feedback regarding the existing perceptions of safety at all levels of an organization via a companywide safety score.
2. **The Hogan Safety Assessment** assesses individuals around six safety-related personality competencies and provides valuable information for hiring and developing candidates.
3. **The Safety Coaching Process** is designed to accurately identify and teach safe tendencies within an organizational context, providing leadership with the necessary feedback to build and maintain a culture of safety.

The Bottom Line

According to recent studies, preventable medical errors are the number-three cause of death in the United States — causing more fatalities than car accidents, breast cancer, or AIDS. Improving patient safety is crucial to restoring people's trust in the healthcare system and ensuring the economic sustainability of hospitals across the country.

Using the Hogan Safety Report, healthcare providers can assess and correct existing perceptions of safety across organizational levels; evaluate the safety potential of employees, current and prospective; teach safe tendencies within an organizational context; and provide organizational leadership with the necessary feedback to build and maintain a safe workplace.

Hogan Assessment Systems is a global personality assessment provider that helps companies select employees, develop leaders, and identify talent. Hogan specializes in identifying high-potential candidates for targeted positions, providing leadership development tools to help emerging leaders realize their full potential, and determining relationships between individual personality characteristics and safety performance. Hogan's assessments can be administered in more than 40 languages and are available on a state-of-the-art platform, giving customers accurate feedback within seconds of completion.

**To learn more about Hogan's Safety solutions,
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