

Hospitals Prescribe New Safety Training Program

(NAPSA)—In an effort to confront growing concerns for patient safety, hospitals are looking for new ways of training their employees—and changing their culture in the process.

According to the Institute of Medicine's 1999 report, "To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System," up to 98,000 people die each year from medical errors, placing medical errors among the top eight causes of death in the United States. Almost 22 percent of Americans report that they or a family member have experienced a medical error of some kind. These errors cost the healthcare industry \$29 billion each year, which is a substantial economic burden.

Patient safety initiatives have typically focused on procedures and technology within hospitals to prevent medical errors. More recently, however, hospitals are turning toward a different approach.

"When you learn that more than 90 percent of all medical injuries and errors are partially caused by a core group of behaviors, you realize that hospitals need a different style of training," said Deanna Parsons, director of risk management for Cabell Huntington Hospital in Huntington, W.Va. "Healthcare facilities also need a training program that will complement existing patient safety initiatives."

Several hospitals nationwide are implementing SafeStart Healthcare, which is a patient-safety training program that focuses on how human behaviors impact patient and employee safety. Safe Start was created by PRIMEDIA Healthcare in Dallas and uses real-life examples to show employees how subtle behaviors can contribute to medical errors.

"Once our employees completed the SafeStart course, we saw the benefits begin to extend beyond the workplace environment," said

Patricia Moss, risk manager for Athens Limestone Hospital in Athens, Ala. "Those of our nursing staff who have completed the

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training now strive to keep safety first in mind, not only with patients, but also for themselves at work and at home. The training has benefited not only our patients but our employees themselves."

Traditionally, healthcare employees are hesitant to report "near misses" or close calls out of fear of punishment or negative reaction. According to Barbara Crim, who is a registered nurse and was involved with the development of SafeStart, that culture is changing.

"SafeStart changes the healthcare culture by creating a non-punitive environment focusing on teamwork and fostering a culture of openness, which results in enhanced employee morale," said Crim, healthcare administrator for PRIMEDIA Healthcare. "This program shows employees that hospital management cares about safety issues and demonstrates that nurses and other clinicians have a substantial impact on their patients."

"Culture is a critical component in patient safety," said Brian Shea, senior manager and patient safety lead for Cap Gemini Ernst & Young in Cambridge, Mass. "Culture is the key that unlocks the benefits of everything we do to enhance the quality and safety of patient care."

More information on patient safety training issues is available at www.safestarthhealthcare.com.