

Hospitals Adopt Uniform Surgical Protocol

Milestone Marks Another Important Step in Commitment to Quality and Patient Safety

Providence, R.I. – June 30, 2009 – Hospitals across Rhode Island gathered today to announce another important step in improving patient safety in our state. Rhode Island is the first state in the nation to have unanimous voluntary adoption of a surgical protocol.

In addition, the protocol establishes uniformity across hospitals so health care practitioners working at multiple organizations will follow the same routine for all surgical procedures. The surgical protocol was developed after months of collaboration by leading experts in Rhode Island's health care community and in consultation with the Joint Commission. Implementation of the protocol will commence on July 1, 2009.

The Rhode Island surgical protocol includes the use of a checklist. A study published in the January 14, 2009 edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine* found the rate of death and complications were significantly reduced after the implementation of a World Health Organization (WHO) surgical checklist before, during and after surgery in certain populations 16 years of age and older. The Rhode Island protocol follows standards developed by WHO.

Elements of the Rhode Island surgical protocol include:

- Involving two licensed providers in the operative site marking, one being the surgeon
- Surgeon marks the operative site with his/her initials
- Active participation by operating room team guided by the use of the checklist
- A "time-out" initiated by the surgeon

The protocol has been endorsed by: the Joint Commission, Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Association of Rhode Island, Rhode Island Patient Safety Collaborative, Rhode Island Medical Society, Rhode Island Chapter of the American College of Surgeons and Rhode Island State Nurses Association

"Today is an important day for Rhode Island's patients," said Kathleen C. Hittner, MD, chair of the Hospital Association of Rhode Island board of trustees and president & CEO of The Miriam Hospital. "Hospitals have taken another important step to improve the quality and safety of the care we provide. We are proud to, once again, be the first state in the nation make a uniform change that will have significant benefit for our patients."

"The Department of Health applauds all the hospitals for drafting and implementing these uniform surgical procedures," said Director of Health David R. Gifford, MD, MPH. "Reducing wrong-site and wrong-side surgeries is a challenge for healthcare facilities across the country. Hospitals will need to work together to continuously evaluate compliance with this protocol and make revisions as they encounter unique or unexpected situations not addressed by the protocol. "

“This new process is the result of considerable examination and review by all the members of the Rhode Island Patient Safety Collaborative,” said Sandra Coletta, president and CEO, Kent Hospital, who also serves as chair of the Collaborative. “By assessing surgical practices and procedures across Rhode Island’s hospitals, today we are pleased to present a thorough and unified plan that provides common policies and guidelines dedicated to patient safety.”

Founded over a half century ago, the Hospital Association of Rhode Island is a statewide trade organization that assists member hospitals in effectively meeting the health care needs of Rhode Island, through advocacy, representation, education and services. HARI members work collaboratively to improve the quality of care delivered and address issues threatening access to health care including increasing health costs, workforce shortages and decreasing reimbursement. HARI members work together to ensure that all Rhode Islanders will receive comprehensive, high quality health care.

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