

Patient Safety, Risk, and Quality Update

From Allied World and ECRI Institute

October 2018

The following news and guidance were recently made available without login from ECRI Institute's *Healthcare Risk Control* and related services. If you have any questions, please email Ajay Aggarwal at Ajay.Aggarwal@awac.com.

Member Q&A

Verbal Orders at the Receptionist's Desk

A risk manager recently sought guidance on risks associated with a receptionist receiving verbal orders from providers and giving test results to patients. In our response, we note that significant patient safety and liability risks are associated with untrained, unauthorized staff providing test results to patients or handling verbal orders from providers. Only specifically authorized staff (such as registered nurses or other appropriately trained clinical staff) should receive provider orders. Even then, verbal orders should be used only when absolutely necessary, and should follow specific processes for verbal order verification.

[Read more in the full response.](#)

News

Paper Towel or Jet Air Dryer: Which Is Linked to Less Bacterial Contamination in Hospital Restrooms?

Bacterial contamination is significantly higher in hospital restrooms that provide jet air dryers than in those that offer paper towels for drying hands after handwashing, according to an article in the *Journal of Hospital Infection*. The study was conducted in three hospitals—one in France, one in Italy, and one in the United Kingdom.

[Read the full summary and HRC Recommendations.](#)

"Hey Alexa, Give Me Some Bad Medical Advice": Patients Must Know the Risks of Virtual Assistants

Patients should be cautioned against using virtual assistants to answer medical questions, according to a study in the September 2018 issue of the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*. Noting that the use of conversational assistants, such as Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa, is becoming widespread, the

authors report that many users believe searching by use of these assistants is more accurate than searching the web.

[Read the full summary and HRC Recommendations.](#)

Transgender-Specific Healthcare Providers Can Make It Easier For Potential Patients to Find Them

Healthcare organizations need to do a better job identifying their providers who offer care for transgender patients, said Jarrett Sell, MD, AAHIVS, medical director of Alder Health Services, Harrisburg, PA, at the fall conference of the Pennsylvania Association for Health Care Risk Management in Hershey (September 15, 2018).

[Read the full summary and HRC Recommendations.](#)

Hurricane Florence Presents Numerous Challenges for Healthcare Facilities

Dozens of hospitals and nursing homes in the Carolinas evacuated ahead of Hurricane Florence last month, according to a September 12, 2018, article from CNN.com. Some hospitals kept their emergency departments open but canceled elective surgeries. Others opened with emergency teams in place.

[Read the full summary and HRC Recommendations.](#)

Speaking the Same Language: Doctors Should Write Letters to Patients in Plain Language

Doctors should write their outpatient clinic letters in plain English, according to a September 2018 initiative from the United Kingdom's Academy of Royal Medical Colleges. The project was spotlighted in a September 5, 2018, article in the *New York Times*. Clinic letters are typically sent to the patient's general practitioner, with the patient getting a copy. Because of this, doctors write "about their patients instead of writing to them," which can cause barriers.

[Read the full summary and HRC Recommendations.](#)

Hospital System's Perinatal Safety Interventions Lead to Sustained Reduction in Adverse Events

A multihospital system's initiative to reduce obstetrical high-risk events was effective in decreasing events at its 37 hospitals immediately after the initiative's introduction and continued to lower adverse events once the initiative had been fully adopted. In an article published August 24, 2018, in the *Journal of Healthcare Risk Management*, the researchers identified the key elements to sustaining the initiative's success.

[Read the full summary and HRC Recommendations.](#)

Healthcare Is Going to the Dogs (and Miniature Horses): Law Firm Answers Questions about Service and Comfort Animals

Healthcare providers' "most biting questions" about service and comfort animals are answered by the law firm Baker Donelson in an August 2018 article. Animals now commonly accompany people to a variety of places, the authors say, and a healthcare facility should be prepared to encounter a patient with a service or comfort animal "sooner rather than later."

[Read the full summary and HRC Recommendations.](#)

Delirium Affects Half of Cardiac Surgery Patients, Lasts for a Year

A small, single-facility study found that not only does delirium affect half of cardiac surgery patients, its effects may last for a year postoperatively. These findings are published in the September 2018 issue of *Anesthesiology*. Of the 142 patients followed, 76 were diagnosed with delirium.

[Read the full summary and HRC Recommendations.](#)