



# Patient Safety, Risk, and Quality Update

From Allied World and ECRI Institute

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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](mailto:Ajay.Aggarwal@awac.com).

## Member Q&A

### Ask HRC: Nitrous Oxide for Analgesia during Labor

A Healthcare Risk Control (HRC) member recently asked for guidance and information on the use of nitrous oxide as an option for labor analgesia. In our response, we noted that nitrous oxide is commonly used for labor analgesia in several countries; a review article from the American Society of Anesthesiologists' (ASA) Committee on Obstetrical Anesthesia noted that nitrous oxide "has been used for several decades in the United Kingdom with good safety outcomes for both mother and child."

[Read the full response.](#)

## News

### The Robot Will See You Now: Meet Xiaoyi, the First Robot to Pass China's Medical Licensing Exam

A Chinese robot named Xiaoyi recently became the first machine to pass a medical licensing exam, according to a recent story in *China Daily*, the largest English-language newspaper in China. The robot scored 456 points out of 600 (a passing score is 360) to pass the written section of China's national medical licensing examination, which the article called an "essential" entrance exam for doctors. The robot can automatically capture data and analyze patient information to make initial diagnoses, the article said, and it will be used to assist doctors to make future treatment more efficient.

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

### Does It Matter What Type of Head Gear a Surgeon Wears?

Disposable, shower cap-like, bouffant-style scrub hats that leave no part of the ear or hair uncovered are no better than skullcaps in preventing airborne contaminants in the operating room (OR), according to a study published in the November 2017 issue of the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*. The authors conducted the study at active ORs in two different hospital systems. Each

subject participated in one-hour mock operations wearing a disposable bouffant hat, a disposable skullcap, and a laundered reusable cloth skullcap.

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

### **What if Excessive EHR Requirements Were Treated as Seriously as Healthcare-Acquired Infections or Readmissions?**

Will we one day look back on physicians being overworked by the electronic health record (EHR) in the same way we currently look at physicians neglecting to wash to their hands? That's a question posed by an MD and associate professor of medicine writing in the November 14, 2017, *New York Times*. It was long known that soap and water were the best disinfectants, the author wrote. "However, it took medicine more than a century to incorporate hand-washing as one of the best investments in our patients' health," the author wrote. "Let's hope it takes less time when it comes to common sense and the [EHR]."

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

### **Study Identifies Six Distinguishing Attributes of High-Value Primary Care**

Providers who deliver high-quality, low-cost care often possess one or more of six attributes, according to a study published in the November/December 2017 issue of *Annals of Family Medicine*. Using commercial health insurance claims data from more than 40 million patients at more than 53,000 primary care practice sites across the United States from 2009 to 2011, the authors identified "high value" sites (sites that ranked favorably for both quality and low total annual per capita spending) and "average-value" sites (sites that ranked near the median for both quality and low spending).

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

### **What Is Behavioral Economics and What Role Will It Play in the Future of Healthcare?**

Work in the field of behavioral economics recently earned one of its leading theorists a Nobel Prize, but its use in healthcare is limited, according to a November 6, 2017, article in the *New York Times*. Behavioral economics looks at how psychological, social, cognitive, and emotional factors play into people's economic decisions. Experts have theorized that employing behavioral economic techniques could improve medication adherence, the article said; a 2014 Cochrane review found that the impact of medication adherence strategies overall is inconsistent.

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

### **Here's How to Predict Which Physicians Will Order Unnecessary Imaging Studies**

Physicians' previous habits of ordering unnecessary imaging tests and their ownership in the imaging equipment are strong predictors that they may order "low-value imaging" for back pain and headache, says a study in the November 2017 issue of *JAMA Internal Medicine*. The researchers studied the use of radiography, computed tomography, and magnetic resonance imaging to evaluate patients with uncomplicated low back pain or headache.

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

### **We Know about a Doctor's Bedside Manner, but What about "Webside" Manner?**

In the age of telemedicine, providers must strive to create intimate and personal connections with patients over a computer, a new skill some are calling a "webside" manner, according to an October 26, 2017, article in *Wired*. Accomplishing this is not easy, the article said. For one, technology issues such as blurry webcam resolution and spotty internet connections can impact a provider's message.

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

### **What Did the President's Opioid Commission Recommend?**

Among the 56 final recommendations issued by the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis on November 1, 2017, are block-grant federal funding for opioid- and substance-use-disorder-related activities, Medicaid waivers for all 50 states to eliminate certain barriers to treatment, better alignment of state and federal privacy laws related to addiction, and mandatory provider education. Among the recommendations specifically of interest to healthcare providers are for policies to be put in place that ensure patient consent before administering opioid therapy for chronic pain.

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

### **What Impact Does a Nurse's Physical and Mental Health Have on Medical Errors?**

Nurses in poorer physical or mental health than their healthier counterparts are more likely to make medical errors, according to an October 23, 2017, study in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. The researchers conducted a survey of 1,790 nurses across the United States; more than half of respondents reported being in suboptimal health. About half of the respondents also reported having made a medical error over the previous five years.

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

### **White House Officially Declares Opioid Use a Public Health Emergency; What Does it Mean?**

President Trump on October 26, 2017, formally declared the opioid epidemic a public health emergency under federal law. According to the White House, the action will expand access to telemedicine service for substance abuse and mental health treatment, which could help reach rural communities hit hard by the opioid crisis.

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