

Making Costly – and Deadly – Medical Errors and Unnecessary Hospital Visits Something Only Grandparents Can Remember

By David Sheon | Mar 28, 2013

“She died from a breakdown in the system. She died from a breakdown in communications.”

These heartbreaking words, from patient safety advocate Sorrel King about the loss of her young daughter Josie King, are words that no one should ever have to say or hear.

Her 10-year commitment to end hospital errors led to a \$1 billion war on errors, funded through the Affordable Care Act. The resulting Partnership for Patients program has already signed up more than 8,000 partners – including organizations and individual medical care providers – in a shared effort to save thousands of lives, prevent millions of injuries and take important steps toward a more dependable and affordable health care system. According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the participants include:

- **Hospitals and national organizations representing physicians, nurses and other frontline health care and social services providers** committed to improving their care processes and systems, and enhancing communication and coordination to reduce complication for patients.
- **Patient and consumer organizations** committed to raising public awareness and developing information, tools and resources to help patients and families effectively engage with their providers and avoid preventable complications.
- **Employers and States** committed to providing the incentives and support that will enable clinicians and hospitals to deliver high-quality health care to their patients, with minimal burdens.

In the April 2011 [announcement launching the program](#), Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius shared two goals of the Partnership for Patients:

1. To reduce preventable injuries in hospitals by 40 percent by the end of 2013, preventing 1.8 million injuries and saving 60,000 lives.
2. To cut hospital readmissions by 20 percent, saving 1.6 million patient complications that force them to return to the hospital. Achieving this goal by the end of this year would mean more than 1.6 million patients will recover from illness without suffering a preventable complication requiring re-hospitalization within 30 days of discharge.

{For a video of Ms. King explaining her work and Secretary Sebelius announcing the Partnership for Patients program, please [click here](#).}

According to CMS, a recent [study by the Office of the Inspector General \(OIG\) \(PDF\)](#) found that 13.5% of hospitalized Medicare beneficiaries experience adverse events resulting in prolonged hospital stay, permanent harm, life-sustaining intervention, or death. Almost half of those events are considered preventable.

A recent article in the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#) showed that specific community-wide quality improvement activities are proven to reduce hospital readmissions.

Do you want to find providers and hospitals near you who have signed the pledge? It's as easy as [clicking here](#).

Do you want to learn more about the specifics of what actions will be taken to reduce accidents and re-admittance, and the studies conducted to determine the solutions? Check out Altarum Institute's [blog post](#) on the topic.

To read this post on RWHC Blog, [click here](#).