Patient Safety Principles and Methods

Classic Articles


This is the infamous “Harvard Medical Malpractice Study” which quantified the number of preventable adverse events in hospitals through extensive chart review. This study and a few others that followed provided quantitative data for the IOM report claim that 44-98,000 deaths per year occur from preventable medical error.


Written by Lucian Leape who has been one of the premier figures in the patient safety movement, this is THE classic article that introduced the topic of medical error to the healthcare industry. It provides a framework for the movement and carefully details the common mechanisms of error from the cognitive psychology literature, relates them directly to medical practice, and offers prevention strategies. Although it is now almost 20 years old, it is still widely relevant and the content remains relevant for patient safety teachers and learners.


This article details how to perform an analysis of a clinical incident using a contributing factor analysis. Several tables show useful examples of latent factors from the frontline through large organizational processes.


This is a short, highly readable article that is great primer to introduce beginning students to the principles of error and safety. It is written by James Reason who first described the swiss cheese model of error. Reason is a cognitive psychologist who was written many books on the topic of error, including the book “Human Error,” which is considered the classic textbook in the cognitive psychology literature on the subject.

Websites

AHRQ Web M and M: Morbidity and Mortality Rounds on the Web
http://webmm.ahrq.gov/

An excellent online resource for learning and teaching patient safety. A few highlights include:
1) New cases of medical error solicited from across the country are published monthly along with invited commentary and teaching Powerpoints to download
2) a glossary that includes standard definitions for terms commonly used in patient safety and adverse event analysis
3) Patient Safety Primers which are a compilation of primers on topics related to patient safety. Webpages are useful for background or introductory readings for learners.
4) Patient Safety Network: catalogued reference library of all published healthcare articles on patient safety topics. Articles can be viewed by topic or by week of publication. There is also a feature in which you can subscribe to receive biweekly emails which will email you all new published articles, books, and monographs in patient safety.

VA Patient Safety Curriculum
http://www.patientsafety.gov/curriculum/
Created by the VA National center for Patient Safety, this website contains teacher guides and teaching materials including slide sets that can be downloaded for immediate use. It covers the topics of introduction to patient safety, human factors engineering, evidence-based patient safety, root cause analysis, and failure mode effects analysis.

Books
A very comprehensive and extremely readable book for the learner or teacher in patient safety. The chapters are well referenced, illustrated, and provide clinical examples highly relevant for the clinician-educator or healthcare student in patient safety.