

Shands HealthCast - January 2008

Improving Patient Safety

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Intro:

Welcome to another Shands HealthCast brought to you by Shands HealthCare. This HealthCast features a discussion about patient safety with Dr. Constance Haan, a University of Florida cardiothoracic surgeon and senior associate dean for educational affairs in Jacksonville. Dr. Haan sees patients at Shands Jacksonville.

For more information about patient safety, call the patient safety hotline at (904) 244-7577. If you are with the media and require patient safety information, please call (904) 244-3140 or visit <http://jax.shands.org>.

Dr. Haan:

The main patient safety concerns in the country relate to both acquiring avoidable illnesses or complications and also the sense of feeling discomfort and feeling out of control or afraid because of a lack of information. That sense of discomfort and feeling a little bit isolated and very afraid about an unknown or unanticipated outcome can be very disturbing and very concerning for anybody.

Patients are becoming more educated about their own wellness and about their healthcare needs. In addition, families have always been advocates for their family members, but in the past it may have taken the form of someone hitting the call button several times or going out and pounding on a nurses' station desk saying "I need help for my loved one and I need it now." The difference in the current day and age is we as healthcare providers are enlisting and encouraging the participation of the patient and the family. We are encouraging them to ask questions. We're encouraging them to question or to offer information that they may have been afraid to share with us before.

The field of medicine is working to address these concerns for patient safety at all levels: national and federal, state and regional as well as local. Healthcare professionals are working to improve the delivery of care to make it safe, timely, effective, efficient and equitable and, most importantly, patient centered.

One example of an initiative might be in the form of a rapid response team where healthcare givers can call on colleagues with special knowledge or assessment skills to come to the bedside and assist in helping a patient with a changing condition and thereby possibly even avoid some serious complication or adverse outcome. In addition, more recently in the endeavor to be more patient-centered and to encourage patients and their families to participate more in their healthcare, such rapid response teams may be activated or called upon by a patient or their family if they notice a change in condition that needs urgent attention.

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Patient safety has become a formal part of the curriculum at the medical school level and also in the residency and fellowship, or post graduate training, for physicians. It's also become a more explicit part of nursing training, therapist training and other professional health types, and I think this is a really important aspect that it's an expectation people are learning how to ensure patient safety. In addition, the accrediting councils for the different types of healthcare provider training are making explicit expectations that clinical outcomes and clinical measures, in other words how the patients are doing, becomes part of the assessment of how well we are educating.

The course work and educational programs offered at UF to enhance patient safety are several. One is in the form of formal didactic lectures on patient safety and how to reduce clinical errors for our patient population. In addition, residents are encouraged to participate in committees in the hospital that will also have a role in influencing patient safety.

One of the most exciting aspects of patient safety training is in the use of simulation. We at the University of Florida College of Medicine - Jacksonville have the largest civilian simulation center in the country— nearly 24,000 square feet of space is dedicated to simulation education. Our Center for Simulation Education and Safety Research offers everything from patient exam and history training for medical students to procedures and skill training for medical students, nursing students, residents and fellows.

Simulation also offers the aspect of being able to train for high-risk scenarios or for low frequency disease states where the outcome of an error would have a huge consequence. And finally, a really exciting part of simulation training also available here on our campus is the ability to train in teams, where the multidisciplinary team functioning training can improve communication, interaction skills and handoffs of information that can become so crucial for patient safety.

If you need care, and you're looking for the best place to receive that care, one thing to keep in mind, you want to go where you get the full commitment of a team of individuals that are all knowledgeable and committed to patient safety.