

The Evolution of HCA's Patient Safety Emphasis

Patient safety is a vital concern for all healthcare providers. The December 1999 report from the Institute of Medicine, "To Err Is Human," triggered significant action at HCA.

In February of 2000, HCA began an in-depth analysis of patient safety issues within its almost 200 hospitals. Extensive data collection and analysis led to a company-wide commitment to assuring patient safety practices are implemented in every HCA hospital.

As a result of the analysis, HCA established a company-wide initiative to create a culture of patient safety as a tangible expression of HCA's commitment to putting patients first.

Thomas F. Frist, Jr., MD, HCA's co-founder and former chairman, is fond of saying "putting patients first" is the secret of success in healthcare. This simple statement quickly became the foundation of HCA's culture and passion for patient safety and led to the development of the following goals:

- Establish patient safety as a visible commitment to our "putting patients first" philosophy
- Move from blaming people to improving processes
- Improve use of technology to prevent and detect error
- Use data to identify and measure improvements

After identifying key areas needing improvement, the company organized teams of clinical experts and healthcare managers from facilities around the country and charged them with finding solutions for ensuring patient safety. The efforts progressed rapidly through their collective knowledge and synergy. Patient safety solutions were tested in a few facilities and, once perfected, were rolled out to all HCA hospitals.

The result – HCA has now implemented or is in the process of implementing multiple evidence-based patient safety programs that are improving healthcare. The company and its hospitals are engaged now, more than ever, in creating solutions that make it easy to do things right and hard to do them wrong.

The work is just beginning. One of the most significant challenges ahead is the need to continually improve the culture of safety. The HCA mission statement affirms "Above all else, we are committed to the care and improvement of human life." This simple statement is the foundation of the company's culture and passion for patient safety. It is also the reason HCA is continually sharing its mistakes and successes with other healthcare providers. HCA believes healthcare providers, working together, can eliminate many patient safety concerns.