

Backgrounder

OHA and hospital patient safety initiatives

- In March 2004, the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care jointly announce Canada's first Patient Safety Support Service (PSSS) which will provide hospitals with assistance to improve patient safety practices. The PSSS will provide internet-based resources for immediate access to information and to provide a tool for the sharing of information. The PSSS will also provide on-site support for education, training.
- The leadership of OHA's patient safety initiatives will be through an expert panel that will include Canada's leading experts on patient safety. This council will include Canada's leading patient experts on patient safety, including Dr. Baker himself.
- Ontario hospitals already participate in the **Medication Safety Support Service**. Working with the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) Canada, this service is the first of its kind in Canada. Its sole purpose is to help hospitals establish safe drug management processes and prevent this leading cause of adverse events:
 - The Medication Safety Support Service has already had a very positive impact. Its first project – to promote the safe use of concentrated potassium chloride – resulted in 71% of hospitals making changes to the storage, availability and use of this medication; and
 - The Medication Safety Support Service is already on to its next project - the **Narcotic Medications Safety Initiative** – a very important program that will provide hospitals with the tools they need to improve the safe and effective use of these potent medicines.
- Every single hospital in Ontario has just completed an audit of their infection control and prevention systems to ensure that the right procedures and measures are in place to prevent and contain the spread of highly contagious viruses – a leading cause of adverse events in hospitals.
- Ontario hospitals are currently also completing a detailed review of their cleaning and sterilization procedures for all orthopaedic surgical instruments.
- Ontario hospitals are also in the preliminary stages of implementing important patient safety changes regarding single use medical devices.

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- Very recently, Ontario hospitals have worked with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Health Canada to clarify and improve the federal regulations related to how hospitals receive information, instructions and training about the cleaning and sterilization of the tens of thousands of medical devices used in Canada each year.
- Ontario hospitals have been playing a leadership role in developing solutions. Earlier this year the OHA and The Change Foundation also released an extremely detailed study on preventing adverse events to provide hospital managers and front-line workers with concrete advice and tools to help prevent the mistakes and accidents that can endanger patient safety. The report is entitled “Strategies for Hospitals to Improve Patient Safety: A Review of the Research” and is available on The Change Foundation website at www.changefoundation.com
- During the SARS crisis OHA and member hospitals worked with government to battle this deadly disease that we had never seen before. New safety procedures were developed and initiated by front line physicians and hospital staff as they learned more about the disease in efforts to prevent its spread.
- 23 Ontario hospitals participate in the Blood Conservation Program funded by the Ministry of Health of Long-Term Care.
- In recent years hospitals have become more vigilant and rigorous in the area of patient safety than ever before. Hospital Boards have identified patient safety as a strategic priority within their institutions and have resourced it too. Safety is now part of the climate at Ontario hospitals.
- A Quality Council, development of high-profile safety centres within hospitals and assigning all safety-related initiatives to the Chief Operating Officer, are some examples of the ways hospitals are implementing their own patient safety agenda and increasing the profile of patient safety to physicians and staff.
- Hospitals also believe that safety is the responsibility of staff at all levels and provide ongoing education and training to promote and ensure patient safety.
- Hospitals are developing and implementing processes that will support and strengthen patient safety initiatives and long-term risk reduction over the long-term. Patient safety is evolving into a clinical arm of risk management. This means integration with the risk management infrastructure already in place at Ontario’s hospitals.
- Hospitals have also been conducting systemic and comprehensive analyses of adverse events and are far better positioned to constantly update operational practices to reduce risk and improve safety.

- Strong knowledge transfer protocols are vital to the ongoing management of risk and fostering of a safety-minded organizational culture. Best practices and robust communication protocols are in place so that hospitals can learn from past experiences and “near misses.”
- OHA and its members have a long history of holding educational events and courses to present the latest in patient safety measures and serve as a forum to exchange best practices. A sampling of topics includes:
 - 2004 reuse of single use medical devices
 - 2003 SARS and the new normal
 - 2002 patient safety, infection control and risk management
 - 2001 medical errors, making patients safer, latex allergies
 - 2000 blood issues, Y2K follow up – lessons learned
 - 1999 infection control, ongoing challenges,
 - 1998 blood issues, Y2K
 - 1997 drug resistant superbugs and latex allergies

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