



ISSUE BRIEF

WSHA Patient Safety Program

# Making Health Care Safer

**Through hard work, collaboration and a shared commitment to safer patient care, Washington State hospitals are voluntarily making significant improvements in health care delivery. The goal is to deliver the right care at the right time, to every patient, every time.**

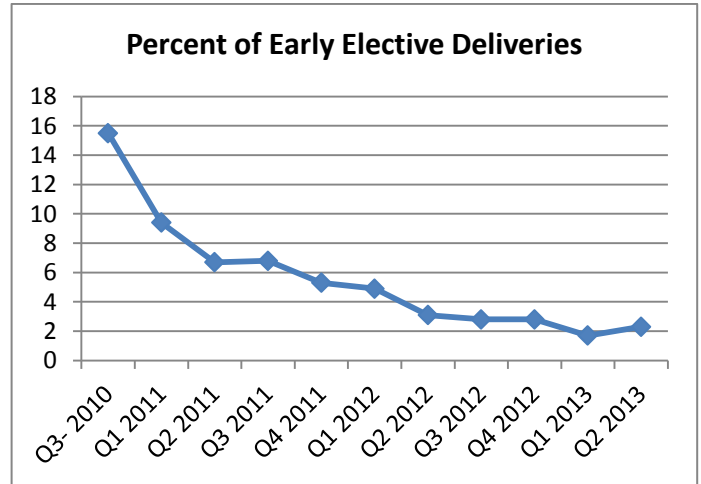
WSHA's "Safe Table Learning Collaboratives" are central to this process. They are called "Safe Tables" because they allow employees from different hospitals to meet and share their experiences in an open, confidential environment.

The Safe Tables also include local and national experts, who present on a variety of patient safety topics several times a month. This collective effort has led to significant outcome improvements, such as reductions in surgical infections, ventilator associated pneumonia, and early deliveries. It has also led to process improvements, such as increased hand-washing and higher rates of staff flu immunizations.

With federal support and all hospitals participating in the program, Washington State has achieved about \$20 million in health care savings and prevented harm to more than 6,500 patients.

Here are a few highlights since 2011:

- 85% reduction in the number of babies born early through elective deliveries,
- 89% reduction in ventilator-associated pneumonia infection,
- 46% reduction in serious pressure ulcers,
- 32% reduction in central-line associated bloodstream infections in intensive care unit patients,
- 32% reduction in episiotomy,



***More babies are being born at full term, thanks to work by physicians, hospitals and patients to reduce the number of early elective deliveries.***

- 18% reduction in readmissions,
- 12% reduction in falls, and
- 10% reduction in surgical site infections.

In addition, Washington State hospitals are tackling more complex safety improvement measures such as reducing readmissions, increasing patient and family engagement, and creating a total hospital culture of patient safety.

### WSHA Commitment

Washington hospitals are committed to pursuing safe, high quality, cost-effective health care.

Since 2005 when the WSHA Patient Safety Program began, *all* hospitals in the state have set competition aside and are working together to measure improvements and share best practices and what they have learned across the state. The WSHA Board of Trustees is solidly committed to continuing this work.

"Health care cannot significantly move forward through the work of individual practitioners or single hospitals. The Washington State Hospital Association's Safe Table Learning Collaborative stands as a national model for improvement."

Atul Gawande, M.D., National expert and author of *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right*

## More Patient Safety News

### Preventing Readmissions

Readmission rates are an important quality indicator of the effectiveness of care, and Washington State has reduced readmissions by almost 20 percent since 2010. According to a recent national comparison, we have significantly lower readmission rates than other states. Still, we know we can improve and we are committed to that path.

To ensure that patients get the care and support they need after they leave the hospital, hospitals are partnering with physicians, skilled nursing homes, state agencies and other health care organizations. WSHA, the Washington State Medical Association (WSMA), and the Puget Sound Health Alliance worked together to develop guidelines for coordinated follow-up, tracking a patient's medications, and timely follow-up visits to the primary care provider.

### Reductions in Emergency Room Use

Health care is a large, complex system, and successful improvements require a high degree of coordination with other organizations, providers, and agencies.

For example, the state was concerned about overutilization of emergency rooms, and so WSMA, WSHA, the Washington Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, and the Health Care Authority formed a collaboration to find a better approach. They were successful.

In the first six months alone, there was a 23% reduction in emergency room visits by Medicaid patients who previously had five or more visits, and a projected savings of \$31 million to the state for the fiscal year.

### Emerging Innovation

WSHA will continue to work with hospitals, government agencies and other organizations to improve the quality of health care in Washington State hospitals. Major federal grants to WSHA are fueling an enormous amount of innovative approaches, and it is exciting to be on the cutting edge of the development of best practices.

Just one example of that is the development of the Safe Deliveries Roadmap. This is an effort to look at the entire continuum of birth, from the beginning of pregnancy through one month after delivery. It is undertaken in partnership with the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses; Department of Health; Health Care Authority; March of Dimes; Northwest Organization of Nurse Executives; Rural

Healthcare Quality Network; WSMA; and the Washington State Perinatal Collaborative.

### WSHA Wins Federal Support

WSHA's established record of successful collaboration and safety improvements was a significant factor in being awarded a Partnership for Patients contract from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2011. Building on the success seen with that contract, WSHA is one of only six organizations in the country to receive a one-year, \$14 million LEAPT (Leading Edge Advanced Practice Topics) contract. This federal contract will support efforts to improve practices that are high risk for causing patient harm. More than 40 WSHA member hospitals will be participating in this rigorous project.

### Quality Transparency and Patient Information

Increasing the availability of quality data helps patients make good health care choices and helps hospitals learn where to focus their improvement efforts. Both of those motivations are good for the overall health care system, which is why WSHA collects and publishes critical safety information for all hospitals in the state.

Visit [www.wahospitalquality.org](http://www.wahospitalquality.org) and check hospital-specific quality indicators such as early elective delivery and infection rates, and stay tuned! Improvements to the site are planned for this year.

Patients and families can also download important patient safety information from [www.wsha.org/qualitySafety.cfm](http://www.wsha.org/qualitySafety.cfm).

### Patient Safety in Rural Communities

Rural hospitals are an essential part of the health care safety net in Washington State, and they provide essential, life-saving care in hard-to-reach places.

They are committed to providing high-quality care, and all rural hospitals are active participants in the Patient Safety Program.

The Rural Health Care Quality Network (RHQN) is a unique statewide program that helps our rural hospitals lead the nation in the care they provide to their communities.