

WHO News

United States of America

Survey on patient safety culture¹

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), in partnership with the Department of Defense, American Hospital Association and Premier Inc. has sponsored the development of a survey on patient safety culture. This survey tool can be used to assess the safety culture of a hospital as a whole, or for specific units within hospitals, as well as to track changes in patient safety over time and evaluate the impact of patient safety interventions.

The questions are designed to help healthcare organizations gauge employee's attitudes about patient safety. The survey is available for downloading online on the AHRQ web site. Once there, you can download the questions, tailor it to your own specifications, and then administer the survey to your staff.

Congress debates legislation on patient safety²

The US "Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act of 2005 – S 544" was unanimously approved by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee on March 9, 2005. The bill, identical to a measure passed by the Senate in 2004 would establish a voluntary medical error reporting system that provides legal protection to caregivers and encourages safety education and information-sharing.

The legislation permits caregivers to analyze the cause of medical errors – without fear of being sued and without compromising patient's legal rights – to promote the development of interventions and solutions that ensure patient safety.

Specifically, this legislation:

- Creates a confidential, voluntary reporting system in which physicians, hospitals, and other health care providers can report information on errors to organizations known as Patient Safety Organizations (PSOs).
- Allows PSOs to collect and analyze unique "patient safety data" and then provide feedback on patient safety improvement strategies.
- Provides that "patient safety data" will be confidential and legally protected.
- Does not limit or affect the availability of any information or evidence that is currently available from sources other than the PSO and can be collected under existing law.

¹Originally published as <http://www.who.int/patientsafety/news/ahrq/en/> (down loaded 20/05/05).

²Originally published as http://www.who.int/patientsafety/news/us_congress_debate/en/ (down loaded 20/05/05).

- Provides for appropriate penalties for unlawful disclosures.
- Recognizes and preserves the protection of confidential patient information under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.
- Does not pre-empt other state and federal peer review laws.