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Safe Patients, Smart Hospitals: How One Doctor's Checklist Can Help Us Change Health Care From The Inside Out



Synopsis

"The tough-minded and revealing story of a leading doctor's crusade against medical harm...Fascinating reading." -Atul Gawande, author of *The Checklist Manifesto*. First, do no harm. Doctors, nurses, and clinicians swear by this code of conduct. Yet, medical errors are made every single day-avoidable mistakes that often cost lives. Inspired by two such mistakes, Dr. Peter Pronovost made it his personal mission to improve patient safety and make preventable deaths a thing of the past, one hospital at a time. *Safe Patients, Smart Hospitals* shows how Dr. Pronovost started a revolution by creating a simple checklist that standardized a common ICU procedure. His reforms are being implemented in all fifty states and have saved hundreds of lives by cutting hospital-acquired infection rates by 70%. Atul Gawande profiled Dr. Pronovost's reforms in a *New Yorker* article and his bestselling book *The Checklist Manifesto* is based upon Dr. Pronovost's success in patient safety. But *Safe Patients, Smart Hospitals* is the real story: an inspiring, thought-provoking, accessible insider's narrative about how doctors and nurses are improving patient care for all Americans, today.

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Customer Reviews

"Safe Patients, Smart Hospitals is the tough-minded and revealing story of a leading doctor's crusade against medical harm. The tale of Peter Pronovost's journey in patient safety is fascinating reading." -Atul Gawande, author of *The Checklist Manifesto*, *Better*, and *Complications* "No one in America has thought more -- and done more -- about patient safety than Dr. Pronovost. *Safe Patients, Smart Hospitals* is the right prescription for American health care." -Sherrod Brown, United

States Senator (Ohio) "Dr. Pronovost and Mr. Vohr offer a constructive and compelling case for patient safety and improving health care quality in the United States. Health providers and policy makers would benefit greatly from reading this book." -Tom Daschle, former Senator and author of *Critical: What We Can Do about the Health-Care Crisis* "Both riveting and important.... *Safe Patients, Smart Hospitals* gives an excellent overview of changes in hospital practice which, when instituted, profoundly affect rates of serious medical complications and death. A pioneer in the field of patient safety, [Peter Pronovost] has radically altered how modern medicine is practiced." -Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph. D., author of *An Unquiet Mind* and *Nothing Was the Same* "A must read for doctors, nurses, administrators and especially the public. Patient safety can only be achieved by everyone being informed and asking questions when...the train is [headed] off the track." -Edward D. Miller, M.D., Chief Executive Officer of Johns Hopkins Medicine, Dean of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and vice president for medicine of The Johns Hopkins University "A wonderful, beautifully written book-if every hospital in the country read it and followed Peter's advice, I believe there would be fewer deaths from medical errors and we would all benefit. Dr. Pronovost is a true hero, both to many in the healthcare industry and patients as well. Because of his hard work, passion, and brilliance, Peter has made hospitals around the world safer for us all. *Safe Patients, Smart Hospitals* is a true testament that one person can make a difference." -Sorrel King, patient safety advocate and author of *Josie's Story* "*Safe Patients, Smart Hospitals* reminds us how great change can be wrought by one person with the courage to do the right thing. Dr. Pronovost's account tells the thrilling story about how--not so long ago--sloppiness and medical arrogance made even the best American hospitals perilous places to spend the night. His remedy: something simple, elegant, convincing." -Jean McGarry, professor at The Writing Seminars, Johns Hopkins University and author of seven books of fiction "Peter Pronovost is a true visionary, whose simple checklist will save many lives and highlight the fact that the simplest answer is often the best, a must-read for all healthcare workers." -Patrick Perry, M.P.H, Executive Editor, *The Saturday Evening Post* "Captivating and readable, this book takes a hard, honest look at the truth about toxic hospital cultures and the need for addressing culture, teamwork and cooperation. The compelling stories Peter shares illustrate the transformation that occurs when institutions address these issues. I also think the emphasis on improving work environments and respect among all professions involved in patient care clearly impacts nurses' satisfaction, retention, and the nursing shortage in hospitals." -Martha N. Hill, PhD, RN, Dean and Professor of Nursing, Medicine and Public Health at Johns Hopkins University "A riveting account right from the first page... *Safe Patients, Smart Hospitals* is a must read for everyone in healthcare including consumers. The authors have covered

particularly well the perspectives and challenges of nurses in keeping patients safe. The book is a "good read" for us all." -Linda H. Aiken, Ph.D., The Claire M. Fagin Leadership Professor of Nursing and Professor of Sociology, Director, Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Research; University of Pennsylvania "Dr. Peter Pronovost was first to recognize checklists have power to save lives and save money. We've heard about Dr. Pronovost's checklists from learned journals and from the TV show 'ER. His innovative ideas promote low cost, low tech solutions that have a high impact." -Barbara Mikulski, US Senator (Maryland) "Having been at Hopkins for over three decades, I have been privileged to witness first-hand enormous advances in patient safety, largely through the efforts of Dr. Peter Pronovost. Through this book, the authors are making life-saving knowledge widely available not only to healthcare providers, but to patients and their loved ones. This book is a long overdue and welcome addition to the body of critically important medical information and it will save lives." -Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., M.D., Professor of Neurological Surgery, Oncology, Plastic Surgery, and Pediatrics "Dr. Pronovost's engaging book describes his journey to galvanize the healthcare community to eliminate bloodstream infections. It is an excellent case study in leadership, and should be read by anyone trying to lead a change effort." -Nolan D. Archibald, Chairman of the Board, President & Chief Executive Officer, The Black & Decker Corporation

PETER PRONOVOST, Ph.D, M.D., is a professor at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and serves as medical director for the Johns Hopkins Center for Innovation in Quality Patient Care. ERIC VOHR was formerly the assistant director of media relations at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and he teaches technical writing at Johns Hopkins University.

Having already read Dr. Atul Gawande's popular book, *The Checklist Manifesto*, I wondered whether or not *Safe Patients, Smart Hospitals*, by Peter Pronovost, M.D., Ph.D., would capture and hold my attention. After one chapter, I had no doubts. As hard as it may be to believe in a country as advanced as the United States, thousands of people die each year from preventable medical mistakes. This book addresses why this happens and what can be done to save many of these people. Dr. Pronovost begins with the tragic story of 18-month-old Josie King, who was accidentally scalded at home and developed second degree burns. She acquired an all-too-common bacterial infection from a central line catheter while in the hospital, and then she got a secondary infection when the antibiotics administered to control the original infection killed helpful bacteria in her digestive system. Then there was sepsis and dehydration, but even all of this would not have killed the young girl were it not for lack of sufficient coordination and cooperation among the medical staff

treating her. Just one chapter into this book you are already grieving, and you want to know more. By the way, if the term "central line catheter infection" sounds familiar, Dr. Gawande writes extensively about this problem in his book (and he characterizes Dr. Pronovost's book as a "tough-minded and revealing story of a leading doctor's crusade against medical harm"). It turns out that Dr. Pronovost's own father died in part because his cancer was not correctly characterized early enough--so Dr. P. finally enlists in the army of reformers. Along the way, he distills an unwieldy 120-page set of guidelines to reduce central line infections from the Center for Disease Control down to five key steps: (1) Wash your hands using soap or alcohol prior to placing the catheter, (2) wear sterile gloves, hat, mask and gown and completely cover the patient with sterile drapes, (3) avoid placing the catheter in the groin in possible, (4) clean the insertion site on the patient's skin with chlorhexidine antiseptic solution, and (5) remove catheters when they are no longer needed. Believe it or not, straightforward procedures like this ultimately reduce infections by over 50% in many cases. Dr. Pronovost tells of an encounter (argument, really) with a surgeon who refused Dr. P's urgent request to perform additional surgery on a recent surgery patient. Fortunately, this surgeon walked away, and another surgeon was persuaded to take up Dr. Pronovost's request. It turned out that the patient's intestine and pancreas had been punctured in the first surgery. Enough examples--you get the story. Oh, one more. Did you know that estimates are that about 30% of the time physicians operate defibrillators incorrectly? The point of Dr. Pronovost's book is not that surgeons, physicians or other health care professionals are intentionally careless. Rather, as Dr. Gawande notes in his book, medicine has become enormously complicated, and the more complicated things are, the greater the chance of errors. Further, the protocols addressing the ways medical professionals communicate with each other need to be adapted in order to solicit and use the best inputs and observations available. One of the famous dictums applied to medicine is, "first, do no harm." That can be easier to say than to do, but with people like Dr. Pronovost and many other medical professionals dedicated to improving health care, the outlook for better care is growing better every day. Thanks for writing this book and sharing your insights, Dr. P.

As a book, it was a bit disappointing. Someone did a very poor job of editing; there were too many word, grammar, and punctuation errors to satisfy me. In addition, it is a prime example of a current fad in nonfiction that overemphasizes the "human" element in whatever subject is being discussed. The book opens, for example, with an extended recount of the admittedly very sad story of a little girl who died unnecessarily at Hopkins due to several shortcomings. This type of narrative continues throughout the book, including long discussions of Pronovost's experiences trying to get his ideas

adopted.(How much of this was a literary technique and how much was ego I would not say without knowing the man.). There was way too much of this kind of thing at the expense of CONTENT. That being said, there is a lot of good stuff here that applies equally well to safety, efficiency, and/or customer satisfaction in most fields, not just hospital care. The principles are the same, although different people express them differently. Pronovost's program has two aspects, TRIP and CUSP. Translating Research into Practice (TRIP) is the problem-solving part. It involves the checklists and other changes to practices, such as the simple idea of storing items often used together in the same cabinet and putting them close to the places where they are used, thereby both saving time and making it less likely that a busy provider will "not bother" with a particular safety item because it is too much trouble to go get it. Although the checklists are the item that grabbed attention, the other aspect, looking at an organization's specific procedures and making improvements, is also a component of CUSP. Every organization is different, and he does not give a lot of general guidance on how to approach this, although there are a number of standard techniques. Comprehensive Unit-based Safety Program (CUSP) is really just a particular implementation of Pronovost's second principle, that of establishing a collaborative culture. He recounts how the traditional hierarchical culture in health care puts the doctors at the top of the totem pole, with surgeons the most insistent on their authority. This can keep other members of the team, such as the nurses who usually spend the most time with the patients, from speaking up even when they see something wrong. It also makes health care professionals often discount observations from patients' family members, even though family, who know the patients best of all, may notice important deviations from the patient's norm that would not be obvious to the health care providers. Another factor of the culture change, although Pronovost does not address this directly, is sensitizing team members to notice small things in their routines that seem inefficient or unsafe and to raise these as issues to be addressed. Another item that Pronovost emphasizes, which I heartily endorse, is the importance of collecting data and measuring results. From daily experience health care members may know what things at a macro level they want to improve, but data will tell them how bad the situation is, perhaps suggest the best places to start making changes, and let them know how successful the change was. Pronovost does not, however, give much in the way of tips on how to get the data you may want or need, which is often not a simple task. Pronovost clearly is a real believer in what he does, and I love his message. Given that the book is 271 pages long, though, he would have been much more useful if he had included more general guidelines or suggestions on how to implement TRIP and CUSP in a given environment and less narrative about Pronovost's cross-country speaking and consulting engagements.

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