Creating Safer Healthcare in Chicago

Chicago Patient Safety Forum

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Voice of the People
Chicago Tribune
435 N. Michigan Ave
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To the Editor:

We read with interest Judith Graham's December 5, 2006 article "Guidelines urge caution in anesthetizing children." As noted in the article, tragic events such as the death of Diamond Brownridge are uncommon, but devastating when they occur. Guidelines such as those described in the article are important but, even more critical is the need for systems and processes for clinicians to both create and implement these guidelines.

The collaboration between the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry is to be commended for creating these joint guidelines. However, putting these to work in the most effective manner will require concerted implementation efforts and cooperation among not only doctors, nurses, pharmacists, but also hospitals, regulatory agencies, and families.

At Ronald McDonald Children's Hospital at Loyola University Medical Center, pediatricians and anesthesiologists have worked together to develop and implement a mandatory and standardized program for training and supervising the doctors and nurses who perform pediatric sedations. Knowing how to react when emergencies occur is essential not only for doctors and nurses during sedation but also for the parents who will be taking the child home. In addition to knowing who to call for emergencies, parents and families are given the opportunity to learn the basic CPR skills needed should an emergency occur.

While patient safety initiatives for adult patients have received considerable attention in hospitals in the Chicago area and across the country, much less is known about pediatric patient safety. Yet, children are not just little adults and we know that most patient safety interventions need to be customized in order to be effective for pediatric patients. Under the sponsorship of the Chicago Patient Safety Forum, five Chicago-area hospitals with pediatric services (Children's Memorial Hospital, John H. Stroger – Cook County Hospital, Mt. Sinai Children's Hospital, Advocate - Lutheran General Children's Hospital and Advocate - Hope Children's Hospital) have formed the Pediatric Patient Safety Consortium and work together to develop and implement patient safety solutions that specifically address the unique risks faced by pediatric patients. Funding from the Michael Reese Health Trust and the Otho S. A. Sprague Memorial Institute supports the Consortium.

Continued improvement in pediatric patient safety for children in our healthcare community will be achieved through continued support for collaborations such as the Pediatric Patient Safety Consortium and by including patients and families in the design, testing, and implementation of patient safety solutions for children.

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