



HALIFAX SYMPOSIA

## HALIFAX 6 CANADIAN HEALTHCARE SAFETY SYMPOSIUM

### News Release

Oct. 18, 2006

#### **Halifax 6 health care conference offers helpful tips to keep you safe**

Vancouver, BC -- Asking your doctor to “sign your site” with a pen -- indicating exactly where the operation should take place before you undergo surgery -- is one of the simple but surprisingly effective ways you can help ensure a safe health care outcome.

Signing your site helps reduce the risk of miscommunication that may lead to a surgical mishap (e.g. the wrong organ or body part being operated on). According to the organizers of the Halifax 6 Canadian Healthcare Safety Symposium, which opens tomorrow in Vancouver at the Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel, this is just one of a number of things you can do to help make your health care experience safer.

Making health care safer and enhancing the overall quality of the health care system are the common goals uniting health care experts from across the country and around the world at the Symposium. The theme of this year’s Symposium is “Safety management: changing the way we do things.”

“Providing safer health care goes beyond encouraging everyone to be more careful and appointing safety officers within health care delivery organizations. Only a paradigm shift in the way we do things – how we plan, practice and produce – will effect real changes in patient safety,” said Dr. Jan Davies, Symposium co-chair.

Health care experts acknowledge there is an important role for patients in improving safety. Here are some other things you can do to help improve your health care safety:

#### **Hand-washing**

Hand-washing is the most effective way to minimize the spread of germs. One-in-nine adults in Canada contracts an infection while in hospital, and an estimated more than 8,000 deaths result each year from hospital-acquired infections. At a minimum, wash your hands before eating, and after using the washroom, sneezing or coughing into your hand, or blowing your nose.

#### **Medications**

You or your family members should keep a list of your medications and take the list (or the medications) to every medical appointment and/or hospital visit. Health care providers (doctors, nurses, pharmacists) need to know which medications you’re taking and to which ones you may be allergic. Double-check your new prescriptions to make sure they are what the doctor has ordered. Read the labels and the warnings. Try to use one pharmacy for obtaining your prescriptions so it can keep track of all prescriptions.

### **Ask questions**

Ask questions of your health care providers if you have any doubts or concerns about care and treatment. Do not be afraid to keep asking until you get all the information you need, or until you understand everything. Try to learn as much as possible about any condition or treatments.

Approximately 600 registered delegates (and many more at 65 webcast sites) will attend the Symposium to focus on the following issues through interactive sessions, presentations, panel discussions, keynote addresses and visual research-based displays:

*Safety management systems:* the systematic and comprehensive management of safety philosophy, policies, procedures and practices.

*Designing for safety:* how patient and provider safety and well-being can be integrated into the planning and building of hospitals and health care institutions.

*Barriers to change:* the psychological, professional, legal and societal forces that hinder change and improvement.

*The consumer:* how patients and families can effect change.

*Measurement:* how to know if changes have been made and if the care being provided is safer.

The Symposium begins at 8:15 a.m. on Friday, Oct. 20 and runs until 4:15 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 21. Two pre-conference sessions take place on Thursday, Oct. 19: one on “Partnering for Patient Safety” at the Sheraton Wall Centre (8:45 a.m. to 5 p.m.); and the other on the use of simulation techniques, entitled “Advances in Healthcare Education for Safety” at the Paetzhold Theatre at Vancouver General Hospital (12:30 p.m. to 4:50 p.m.).

For more information, go to: <http://www.buksa.com/halifax/>

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