

What can a PSO do to help physician practices improve patient safety?

Commitment to patient safety is like a three legged stool. It requires a culture of patient safety, a systems approach to improvement, and an active error detection process. When one leg of the stool is broken the entire stool falls. One means of engaging physician practices in patient safety is through participation in a patient safety organization (PSO), thereby strengthening those three stool legs.

ECRI Institute patient safety assessments have found that physician practices are doing well in urgent/emergency care and confidentiality and privacy. However, they are struggling with communication, which affects all three legs of the stool. Specifically, communication breakdowns between providers occur with flow of information regarding final readings for diagnostic studies and reports as well as patient follow-up appointments or “no shows.” Additionally, there are communication breakdowns between providers and health insurers which result in delays in care. In particular, the verification and approval process for care and education of chronically ill patients, who require multiple services and medications, can be complicated and difficult.

Physician practices can overcome some of these challenges by learning from one another. Additionally, the sharing of information through a PSO facilitates data aggregation to identify trends and successful strategies. When ECRI Institute PSO works with medical groups who share information, we identify the practices’ strengths and areas in need of improvement and facilitate the sharing of solutions in a focused way. Physician practices that work closely with a health system or are part of a health system are able to identify issues that are common across healthcare settings, such as medication reconciliation, handoff communication, coordination of care, and prevention of readmission. When the inpatient and outpatient facilities work together they are able to leverage their efforts and often extend many inpatient solutions into the ambulatory setting.

ECRI Institute PSO membership assists practices in this information-gathering process. Our analysts conduct custom research of patient safety problems; we provide risk assessments, culture of safety surveys, and patient safety tools for physician office practices; and the PSO reporting system allows physician practices to report adverse events and near misses in a protected legal environment.

For more information, please contact pso@ecri.org to learn how ECRI Institute PSO may help you improve patient safety in physician offices.

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How Can We Help You?

Whether you have questions about the final rule or want to learn more about ECRI Institute PSO and/or support for other PSOs, we would be happy to hear from you. Please contact ECRI Institute at pso@ecri.org or call (610) 825-6000, ext. 5558.