

## **Why Every Week Should be Patient Safety Awareness Week**

This year, March 4 through March 10 was the National Patient Safety Foundation's Patient Safety Awareness Week.

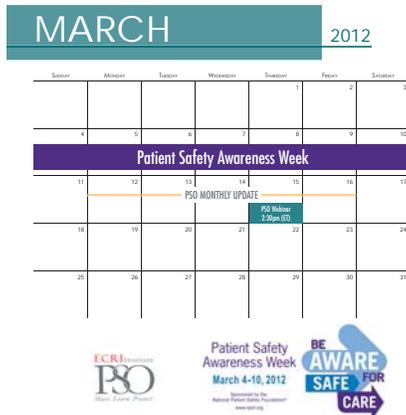
Why is this awareness campaign so important? Patient safety affects all of us, medical professionals and patients alike. A successful culture of safety, in which every staff member demonstrates a commitment to safety; in which communication among staff members is frequent, open, and honest; in which safety is rewarded over efficiency and throughput; and in which errors are reported and learned from, actually works. When an organization makes an honest, thorough commitment to doing things the right way in the interest of patient safety, change happens. A well-established culture of safety can honestly be described by the organization as simply "the way we do things around here."

The core purpose and values of ECRI Institute PSO illustrate this culture by establishing mechanisms through which reporting and learning from errors and near misses happens and spreads among participating members. An atmosphere in which healthcare workers can report actual or potential errors, events, and hazards without fear of reprisal is the hallmark of a nonpunitive environment and is consistent with the open communication necessary for a culture of safety.

"The mission of ECRI Institute PSO is to help facilities achieve their highest levels of safety and quality in healthcare by collecting and analyzing patient safety information and sharing best practices and lessons learned," says Karen Zimmer, MD, MPH, FAAP, Medical Director of ECRI Institute PSO.

The leaders of healthcare organizations can support a culture of safety through specific actions and behaviors that embody a commitment to safety. These actions and behaviors include promoting open communication about safety concerns, educating staff about safety practices, empowering staff to identify and mitigate hazards and risks, advocating safety as everyone's responsibility, and allocating adequate safety resources. The development of a culture of safety is an ongoing process, and the organization cannot expect it to happen overnight. Even when goals have been reached, the organization must constantly reassess its growth and reaffirm its commitment to patient safety.

“Every week should be patient safety awareness week,” says Zimmer. And, with a commitment to creating a culture of safety through open communication and continued education, every week can be.



ECRI Institute PSO offers its 2012 Patient Safety Calendar to remind you that every week should be patient safety awareness week.

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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 [psa@ecri.org](mailto:psa@ecri.org) or call (610) 825-6000, ext. 5558.