Risk identification and Mitigation in Healthcare

First of all, we need to know that Risks form an integral part of all organizations, but risk management in healthcare is considered crucial because herein the human lives are involved. This is a challenging proposition as risk managers have to cater to and endeavour among several responsibilities to keep their organizations safe. Patient safety undoubtedly would ever remain as our main responsibility. This crucial task involves identifying high-risk in Hospitals, that could cause harm and damage to all the stakeholders – patients, visitors, and employees; hence, advocating and implementing risk mitigation programmes, besides creating a robust reporting framework for probable adverse events is the order of the day.

Risk management in healthcare comprises the clinical and administrative systems, processes, and reports employed to detect, monitor, assess, mitigate, and prevent risks. By employing robust strategies for risk management, healthcare organizations proactively and systematically safeguard patient safety as well as the organization’s assets, market share, accreditation, reimbursement levels, brand value, and community standing.

The WHO in its Patient Safety Charter states the following. I shall enumerate one after the other.

* **The occurrence of adverse events due to unsafe care is likely one of the 10 leading causes of death and disability in the world .**
* **In high-income countries, it is estimated that one in every 10 patients is harmed while receiving hospital care.**
* **Each year, 134 million adverse events occur in hospitals in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), due to unsafe care, resulting in 2.6 million deaths.**
* **Globally, as many as 4 in 10 patients are harmed in primary and outpatient health care. Up to 80% of harm is preventable.**
* **In OECD countries, 15% of total hospital activity and expenditure is a direct result of adverse events.**

Every year, millions of patients suffer injuries or die because of unsafe and poor-quality health care. Some of the concerns regarding patient safety are,

**Medication errors**, a leading cause of injury and avoidable harm in health care systems

**Health care-associated infections which** occur, all over the world.

**Unsafe surgical care procedures** that would cause complications in up to 25% of patients.

**Unsafe injection practices** in health care settings could transmit infections, including HIV and hepatitis B and C,

**Diagnostic errors** occur in about 5% of adults in outpatient care settings

**Unsafe transfusion practices** that would expose patients to the risk of adverse transfusion reactions and the transmission of infections

**Radiation errors** that might culminate in overexposure to radiation and cases of wrong-patient and wrong-site identification

**Venous thromboembolism (blood clots)** is one of the most common and preventable causes of patient harm.

Hospital Planners should therefore carefully analyse these aspects in order to build a functional operations management system, by taking into due account crucial factors that cause potential risks. This includes patients’ outlook, existing market scenario, competitor threats, the internal organizational issues, healthcare regulatory requirements, technology advancements and financial aspects.

**Key Components of Performing Risk Management in Healthcare**

To navigate the healthcare risk continuum healthcare organizations and risk managers need to:

* **Identify Risk**Since risk management involves managing uncertainty and new risk is constantly emerging, it is challenging to recognize all the threats a healthcare entity faces. However, through the [use of data](https://catalyst.nejm.org/big-data-healthcare/), institutional and industry knowledge, and by engaging everyone — patients, employees, administrators, and payers—healthcare risk managers can uncover threats and potentially compensatory events that otherwise would be hard to anticipate.
* **Quantify & Prioritize Risk**To accomplish this, risk matrices and heat maps can be deployed that will also help to visualize risks and promote communication and collaborative decision-making.
* **Investigate & Report Sentinel Events**When a sentinel event occurs, quick response and thorough investigation address immediate patient safety issues and reduce future risk. Having an established plan in place promotes calm and measured response and transparency by staff and ensures that corrective actions can be implemented and evaluated.
* **Perform Compliance Reporting**As with the Joint Commission, NABH, and other oversight bodies mandate reporting of certain types of incidents including sentinel events, medication errors, and medical device malfunctions. Incidents such as wrong-site or patient surgery, workplace injuries, medication errors, etc. need to be documented, coded, and reported.
* **Capture & Learn from *Near Misses*& *Good Catches***When mistakes or adverse events are fortunately avoided due to intervention, “near misses” and “good catches” occur.
* **Think Beyond the Obvious to Uncover Latent Failures**Active failures are obvious and easily-identified — when a nurse administers the wrong medication dose to a patient for example. Latent failures, on the other hand, are often hidden and only uncovered through analysis and critical examination. When exploring the causes of an unfavorable episode, learn to consider underlying and less-readily-apparent reasons.
* **Deploy Proven Analysis Models for Incident Investigation**Models for analyzing accidents are used to understand latent failures and causes as well as relationships among risks. Failure Mode and Effects Analysis, [Root Cause Analysis](https://des.wa.gov/services/risk-management/about-risk-management/enterprise-risk-management/root-cause-analysis) are also deployed and involve detailed frameworks to help uncover the causes and effects of medical mistakes.
* **Invest in a Robust Risk Management Information System (RMIS**) RMIS can greatly enhance risk management by improving performance through available and reliable systems while providing overall cost reduction by automating routine tasks.
* **Find the Right Balance of Risk Financing/Transfer/Retention**Risk financing involves an organization’s methods for efficiently and effectively funding loss that results from risk. It includes risk transfer usually enabled through insurance policies and risk retention such as self-insurance and captive insurance.

Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth, popularly referred to as SBV has been taking the lead in this part of the country by embarking on unique initiatives aimed at preparing health care professionals to acquaint themselves with strategies to manage and mitigate risk. Mention must be made of the unique Fellowship programmes at SBV, namely Pandemic management and Disaster management.

To conclude, there should be a comprehensive and streamlined approach to hospital risk management and this must be facilitated by well laid out processes elaborated by the senior functionaries of the Hospitals. Hospitals need to necessarily facilitate patient safety initiatives and also reduce risk of readmissions. This would have a profound and favourable impact on attaining overall patient satisfaction and promoting patient safety.