Lessons learned and challenges ahead: Canadian experiences in improving patient safety


The reports in this issue bear witness to the achievements of people and organizations across Canada in improving patient safety.
A critical challenge for those working on patient safety has been the fear of litigation and discipline that limits discussion of the actions and conditions leading to adverse events. In the final section of this issue, Disclosure and Accountability, we highlight the nature of the legal environment that influences and sometimes steers our efforts to improve safety, and provide important accounts of organizational strategies for improving disclosure and balancing the needs for accountability and safety.

While risk can never be totally eliminated, we know safer healthcare is possible.

Together, the more than two dozen papers in this special issue offer an important resource for those just beginning to grapple with these complex issues. Clearly the achievement of more reliable healthcare will require substantial efforts to build new competencies and change the existing attitude that the risk of injury is the inevitable accompaniment of complex care. While risk can never be totally eliminated, we know safer healthcare is possible. The wisdom derived from the experiences reported in this issue highlight the successes achieved and some of the challenges that remain.

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Dr. Baker is the guest editor of this special issue of Healthcare Quarterly focused on Patient Safety.

References