Hospital Executives, Boards Lead a Culture of Safety

The Joint Commission issued a new leadership standard earlier this year, calling on hospital governing bodies, top executives and medical staff to work collaboratively to foster a culture of safety. A culture of safety is one in which an open and non punitive atmosphere enables caregivers and leaders to share information, identify problems and create viable solutions. "It is the leaders of the organization that are most effective in changing the culture," says Joint Commission Senior Vice President Paul Schyve. Policies and procedures must be created to prevent harm and problems within the healthcare system without interfering with the distribution of quality care. However, resources must be available to staff to ensure that care is of the highest quality and is distributed safely. Quality indicators, like those from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for "never events," can provide viable performance goals that boards should help their hospitals surpass.

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