



Patient Safety and Newcomers: What We Know and What We Don't Know

What are patient safety incidents, and how often do they happen?



1 in 17 hospital stays involved at least one harmful event



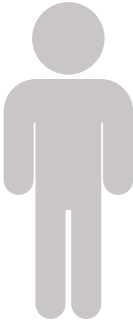
150,000 harmful events per year

A patient safety incident is an event or circumstance which have resulted, or did result, in unnecessary harm to a patient. The incidents are not complications, side effects, or situations where policies or practices were not followed. Patient safety incidents happen because there are not enough safeguards in the healthcare system. About half of these incidents are considered preventable.

Harm can be:

Spiritual

Social



Psychological

Cultural

Emotional

Potential causes of harm:

Health system resources

- Staff shortages
- Funding
- Access to medical records; wait times

Equipment

- Mechanical issues
- Training to use equipment properly and safely

Human factors

- Miscommunication with patients or between caregivers
- Exchange of information

Patients or family or caregivers say they are not being listened to

- When they see or experience and point out that signs or symptoms are getting worse for them or loved ones

Missed or delayed diagnosis

- Delayed tests or getting test results

Wrong diagnosis

Failure to provide appropriate treatment or follow up on

- Medication errors
- Pressure injuries or infections



Who is most at risk?



Patients who don't speak English or French are **30%** more likely to experience harm

What are the implications for newcomers?



Patients who have less education than high school are **20%** more likely to experience harm

- There is no data showing the incidence of harm to newcomers. If information about patients' newcomer status were gathered, it would be possible to compare how often newcomer patients experience harm in a hospital setting compared with other populations.
- CIHI data doesn't include home care, long-term care or primary care. There are gaps in our knowledge of where patient harm takes place.
- Human factors like miscommunication are more likely to occur during interactions in which the patient does not speak English or French as a mother tongue and has no access to trained, professional healthcare interpretation.
- N4 has produced a position paper and an advocacy letter to support the use of professional healthcare interpretation.

What can you do to ensure care is safe?

Preventing harm is everyone's responsibility; the more prepared and involved patients/families are in their care along with care providers, the safer care and outcomes will be. For newcomers, translation of discussions and information will be very important for clear understanding of their care, including to:

- Ask about any potential safety risks with the care and treatment patients receive. Asking questions will help mitigate the risks at every critical point in the patient's journey.
- Ask questions about and ensure adequate information is provided about the patient's care plans, in an easy-to-understand manner.
- Carefully read information provided. Listen during discussions and take notes. Ensure translation or cultural, emotional or spiritual support is made available as needed. Patients should bring someone with them on their healthcare journey.
- Ensure people feel safe to speak up if there is a concern. This is a chance to learn about safety and available resources.
- Listen to newcomer needs and advocate for additional supports.



There are resources available to help you:

- **Five Questions To Ask To Prevent A Diagnosis Error or Mistake**
- **Resources to Support a Safe Care Journey**
- **Do Bugs Need Drugs?** Guides to safe antibiotic use in multiple languages
- **Patients and families, members of Patients for Patient Safety Canada share their stories**

This snapshot was developed by the
National Newcomer Navigation Network (N4) in collaboration with **Patients for Patient Safety Canada**. If you need additional information, contact
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