

EDITORIAL

Advocating for Better Quality Healthcare

(Hamilton, Bermuda; 2nd December, 2016) – Do you know Jane Doe? She bears the physical scars of a health procedure gone wrong. She doesn't sleep at night and has health bills that will not go away. Every time she looks in the mirror, she is reminded of what happened to her. Whenever she begins a new romantic relationship, she fears when it will become intimate.

And do you know John Doe? He wears a constant smile on his face because his health procedure was done right. He trusts his health professional, goes to a safe health facility for regular checkups and he is no longer in pain.

What do Jane Doe and John Doe have in common? They both have used Bermuda's health system, each with different results. In Jane's case, the health professional was not operating in a safe facility. They did not follow best practice standards and there was no one to check the level of safety or quality in the facility.

This is the Health Council's mission – to monitor safety and quality. There are facilities that consistently create smiling John Does. However, there is one too many facilities that create Jane Doe stories. As a patient, if you have concerns about the quality of care received or the health facility in which you received your care, the Health Council is here to advocate for you. If you have questions about your health insurance coverage or the cost of healthcare, the Health Council is here to help.

As a health professional or facility if you have questions about the care your patient received, or whether a facility should be performing a specific procedure, we are here to answer those questions. If your claims aren't being reimbursed we are here to help you recover what is owed for the health services you provide. If a patient shows up for care and does not have health insurance coverage, the Health Council will help them to gain access.

We have been keeping track of patient stories since 2009 in our comprehensive database of complaints and queries. It is these stories which guide our suggestions for improvements to Bermuda's health system. The concept of the [proposed patient safety laws](#) was informed by these stories. The patient safety laws represent Bermuda's attempt to encourage safer, better quality healthcare. The laws ensure that health services are provided in first-rate facilities by trained health professionals using safe medical equipment to diagnose and treat health conditions.

Patient safety laws have been in place in other countries for decades. In the US, patient safety laws began in 1972 when the National Center for Health Services Research began reviewing healthcare delivery and appropriateness of care; the FDA continued this work when it began regulating medical devices in 1976. In Canada, the Canada Health Act of 1984 established

parameters for regulating medical devices (including market entry) and health facilities which are eligible for health insurance reimbursement. In the UK, the Care Quality Commission began setting standards for health facilities more comprehensively in 2009, after the Healthcare Commission and two other entities were merged who had already been providing oversight of some health facilities and health technology. These laws have worked to improve quality and keep people from exposure to unnecessary harm.

Like other countries, many of Bermuda's residents including health professionals and facilities desire to see safer, better quality care. The Health Council wants you to be reassured that every time you walk into a health facility - whether you are visiting your doctor, mental health professional, massage therapist or the hospital - that it is safe and operating at the highest standards. When it comes to healthcare we should feel as safe as we do on an airplane, in a building, or eating out at a restaurant. The Health Council wants to eradicate Jane Doe stories because we support [S.A.F.E.](#) care. Do you?

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About Bermuda Health Council

Established in January 2006, the Bermuda Health Council (Health Council) is tasked with regulating, coordinating and enhancing the provision of health services in Bermuda. Led by a Board representing a broad range of sectors in Bermuda's community, and staffed by a team of committed professionals, the Health Council works with health system stakeholders toward achieving a quality, equitable and sustainable health system.