

EDITORIAL

Improving Health S.A.F.E.ty

(Hamilton, Bermuda 14th November 2016) - As a passenger on a plane, you know the pilot is trained, the engines checked, and the flight path clear. As a customer in a restaurant you know the establishment has its liquor license, the food is prepared in a clean environment, and the chef is trained. As a member of the public, you enter a building knowing the electrical wiring is secured, the roof is constructed according to building codes, and that it is not a hazardous environment. In each of these examples, your safety is a no-brainer. Safety laws are *needed* in healthcare to ensure quality care at fair costs and the protection of patients.

Bermuda currently has approximately 334 health service providers, 2,470 registered health professionals, and in some cases more health technology per capita than many OECD countries. So, how do we keep safe? We are very fortunate in Bermuda as most of our health professionals are properly trained and their credentials are vetted by statutory boards. Also, some of our equipment like nuclear scanners and radiation emitting equipment are checked to ensure routine maintenance. No one deserves to be exposed to unnecessary radiation, especially when it could be prevented.

However, there is one gap. Unlike with the airplane, building, and restaurant, no one is checking that the facility is delivering the right health services and using the right tools to provide care. No one is checking that there is enough high risk medical equipment in the system to meet the population's needs. And no one is checking that when financial interests exist, the care you receive is still medically necessary and clinically appropriate. The newly proposed patient safety laws will check and the quality of care will improve.

For example, let's say you have a bad toothache. You go to the dentist. You describe your problem and the dentist recommends an x-ray. The dentist owns the x-ray and they let you know that. The x-ray is used to determine what's causing the toothache and guide the dentist in deciding the best course of treatment. The dentist explains the problem, how they will treat it, and tells you how much the treatment will cost. Eventually you leave the dentist's office in less pain. Under the newly proposed patient safety laws what you will see happens behind the scenes: this dentist would be listed on the register of health professionals kept by the Dental Board, the dental practice would be listed on the register of all health businesses in Bermuda confirming they offer credible dental services, the x-ray machine would have been checked for routine maintenance and listed on a register of safe equipment and the content of your conversation with the dentist would have been guided by standards of care, and checks with your insurance company about paying for the visit. This is safe care.

Transparency, oversight and accountability through regulation are what make Bermuda's health system safe, effective, and aligned with other countries in the

world. Compromising on the integrity and reputation of health professions and lax public safety is unacceptable. Everyone is entitled to competent, safe, healthcare at fair costs. Enacting standards and guidelines through the patient safety laws will assist Bermuda in delivering exceptional healthcare. Many support safe 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.