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## BNA's Health Care Policy Report™

Source: Health Care Policy Report: News Archive > 2015 > 05/11/2015 > State News > Pennsylvania: Report Says 'High Harm' Events Declined 45 Percent Over 10 Years

23 HCPR 718

### Pennsylvania

#### Report Says 'High Harm' Events Declined 45 Percent Over 10 Years



By Leslie A. Pappas

May 1 — Adverse events in Pennsylvania health-care facilities that led to death, near-death or permanent harm to patients have dropped by 45 percent since mandatory reporting began 10 years ago, the state's independent patient safety agency said April 30.

In its 2014 annual report, the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority (PSA) also found that "serious events" decreased in 2014 by 6.2 percent per month compared with 2013, and "incidents" decreased by 2.4 percent per month compared with 2013. A "serious event" is defined as an adverse event resulting in patient harm, and an "incident" is a near-miss in which the patient wasn't harmed but could have been, according to the PSA. "High harm" events are the worst types of serious events.

#### Statewide Data Reporting

The PSA began collecting data about adverse events and near-misses from Pennsylvania's health-care facilities more than a decade ago, Laurene Baker, the authority's director of communications, told Bloomberg BNA in a telephone interview April 30.

The PSA was established as an independent state agency under Pennsylvania's Act 13 of 2002, the Medical Care Availability and Reduction of Error Act, after a medical malpractice crisis in Pennsylvania prompted insurers, doctors, health-care facilities and the government to act, Baker said. Under the law, hospitals, ambulatory facilities, birthing centers and some abortion clinics are required to report serious events and incidents to the authority, which analyzes data, publishes reports and makes recommendations for improvement.

The authority, which is nonregulatory and nonpunitive, has collected and analyzed more than 2.2 million reports since statewide reporting began in June 2004. Baker said the authority's data don't explain why the number of events was decreasing.

#### Hospital Comments

Michael J. Consuelos, senior vice president for clinical integration at the Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania, said the Pennsylvania hospital community has supported efforts to improve patient safety, and the PSA's report reflects the result of those efforts.

"The authority's annual report shows that patient safety is a high priority for hospitals," Consuelos told Bloomberg BNA in an e-mailed statement April 30.

He noted that his association recently worked with more than 130 acute-care, rehabilitation, psychiatric, long-term care facilities and ambulatory surgery centers in Pennsylvania on a three-year project to improve patient safety, resulting in a drop in all-cause harm by 37 percent and a 26 percent drop in readmissions.

#### Report Reflects National Trend

The PSA's report reflects a national trend, according to Herbert Cushing, chief medical officer at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia.

"Patient safety in the country has improved a great deal in the past decade," Cushing told Bloomberg BNA in a telephone interview April 30. Increased scrutiny from Medicare, professional societies, hospital boards and increased state reporting requirements have all made hospitals scrutinize their work more closely, which has increased patient safety overall. "Infection rates are down, medication errors are down, so it's not surprising that Pennsylvania has reported that events are down, too," he said.

Cushing said he expects even more reporting and better safety awareness in the coming decade as electronic medical records make it easier to report and analyze data.

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#### BNA Snapshot

**Development:** Data from Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority show "high harm" events have decreased 45 percent in 10 years.

**What's Next:** Electronic records and new technologies could increase ability to analyze, report adverse events in health-care facilities.

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The PSA's 2014 Annual Report may be found at  
[http://www.patientsafetyauthority.org/PatientSafetyAuthority/Documents/Annual\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.patientsafetyauthority.org/PatientSafetyAuthority/Documents/Annual_Report_2014.pdf).

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ISSN 1521-5369

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