



AAJ News Brief for David Smith

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LEADING THE NEWS

Study finds hospital safety still lacking.

In a front-page study, the [New York Times](#) (11/25, A1 Grady) reported efforts "to make hospitals safer for patients are falling short, researchers report in the first large [study](#) in a decade to analyze harm from medical care and to track it over time." The study, "conducted from 2002 to 2007 in 10 North Carolina hospitals, found that harm to patients was common and that the number of incidents did not decrease over time. The most common problems were complications from procedures or drugs and hospital-acquired infections." The study, which is "being published on Thursday in *The New England Journal of Medicine*," is "one of the most rigorous efforts to collect data about patient safety since a landmark report in 1999 found that medical mistakes caused as many as 98,000 deaths and more than one million injuries a year in the United States."

[Bloomberg News](#) (11/29, Olmos) reports the study found "almost one in five hospital patients was injured by their care," and researchers "found little improvement from industry and government efforts to improve safety." The "six-year study of 2,341 hospital admissions in North Carolina found that 18 percent of patients suffered at least one safety-related incident, ranging from minor injuries with little harm to life-threatening mistakes and fourteen deaths." The North Carolina hospitals "were chosen because the state is considered a leader in efforts to improve patient safety."

The [Boston Globe](#) (11/29, Cooney) reports Dr. Christopher Landrigan, "a patient safety researcher at both Children's Hospital Boston and Brigham and Women's Hospital, led a team that studied a sample of more than 2,300 patient admissions to 10 hospitals in North Carolina between 2002 and 2007." They "picked the state because of its active role in safety training programs. To see if those efforts were paying off, they used a tool designed by the Cambridge-based Institute for Healthcare Improvement to detect cases in which care went wrong." Overall, "there were 588 instances of harm suffered by nearly 1 in 5 patients admitted to all 10 hospitals."

[Modern Healthcare](#) (11/29) reports "the rate of harm -- 25 instances per 100 hospital admissions -- did not change significantly during the study's five-year span from 2002 to 2007, they said. And of the instances of patient harm they detected, 50 were life-threatening and 14 patient deaths were attributable to medical errors."



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