

Safety experts, celebrities want aviation-like agency to protect patients

Patient safety experts and celebrities are calling for an independent agency modeled after the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to better protect patients, American Medical News reported.

Having an NTSB-type entity to look into medical errors and submit deidentified reports to physicians, hospitals and the public could improve safety and save lives and money, according to an article in the Journal of Patient Safety co-authored by Charles R. Denham, founder and chairman of the Texas Medical Institute of Technology; US Airways Flight 1549 pilot Chesley B. "Sully" Sullenberger; actor Dennis Quaid; and aviation safety expert John J. Nance.

The agency would directly link accident investigation and preventive action, as NTSB "Blue Cover Reports" of aviation problems usually lead to direct changes in federal regulations, airline policies and in the cockpit, noted amednews.

A similar approach would not only curb medical harm but also the associated healthcare costs. For example, healthcare losses are equivalent to 20 Boeing 757 planes crashing each week, with \$10 million in each cargo hold, according to the article research announcement.

Yet critics note that accident reports in healthcare significantly outnumber those in aviation, making it hard to duplicate the NTSB's success. "Some aspects of safety in health care ... are fundamentally different," HHS Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Director Carolyn Clancy told amednews.

However, the concept reinforces a Commonwealth Fund-supported study last year that identified 15 aviation safety measures not regularly used in healthcare that could improve the quality of care and save lives. They included the "sterile cockpit rule," which reduces unnecessary distractions during critical activities, and the "first-name-only rule," which promotes a work environment where healthcare workers feel comfortable questioning one another.

<http://www.fiercehealthcare.com/story/safety-experts-celebrities-want-aviation-agency-protect-patients/2012-05-17>