



Should EMRs include Joint Commission safety goals?

By jsimmons | July 14, 2011

The Joint Commission's annual National Patient Safety Goals (NPSG) for hospitals should be incorporated into the electronic medical record (EMR) certification process, a commentary proposes in the most recent issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

For 2011, the NPSG priorities for hospital quality improvement initiatives are patient identification, staff communication, medication labeling, infection control practices, medication reconciliation and interactions, and mitigation of suicide risks.

If "designed, developed, implemented, and used correctly," EMRs--along with clinical decision support interventions, computerized physician order entry, and bar code medication administration--potentially can play critical roles in addressing these safety goals, say authors Ryan Radecki, MD, of East Carolina University and Dean Sittig, PhD, University of Texas Health Science Center.

Medication reconciliation is the "best example" of how current and planned EMR Meaningful Use criteria can be aligned, the authors write. Safety problems can arise when accurate medication lists are not available during transitions of care. However, applying EMRs to this NPSG can improve "interoperability of medication" lists across organizations and EMRs, they said.

EHRs also could make patient identification more reliable, they suggested. This can be achieved by including visual reminders such as photographs and requirements to reenter the patients' initials if the system finds patients who have sound-alike or look-alike names.

For more details:

- read the JAMA commentary [1] (reg. Required)
<http://jama.ama-assn.org/content/306/1/92.full>
- see the Healthcare IT News article [2]
<http://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/joint-commission%E2%80%99s-6-safety-goals-should-be-part-ehr-certification>