

Emergency physician's loss sparks advocacy

December 4 2012

Jonathan Welch, MD, a physician in the Department of Emergency Medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital, never thought his family would be part of a medical error. But when his mother's battle with cancer took a sudden turn and she was rushed to a community hospital in Wisconsin, Welch watched in helpless horror as a series of mistakes lead to her death. After the funeral, he encouraged the Wisconsin hospital's administrators to make changes to avoid future errors and deaths, but his experience proved frustrating and fruitless. Now, in an essay that appears online December 3, 2012 in *Health Affairs*, Welch is urging hospitals to give a larger voice to patients and their families.

"In hospitals across the country, there are patients like my mom whose survival and well-being depends on incorporating patients and their families into care," said Welch. "[Medical professionals](#) need to listen to every voice and do everything possible to avoid repeating terrible mistakes."

In the two years since his mother's death, Welch has become an advocate for patient and [family involvement](#) in medical care. Welch encourages hospitals to follow the lead of his own hospital, Brigham and Women's, which has established 14 patient and family advisory councils. These councils advise BWH's nurses, doctors and administrators on ways to improve the safety and quality of the hospital's care and services. Members are encouraged to provide input on institutional policies, programs, and practices.

Additionally, when patients and their relatives raise major concerns,

those concerns are brought before an executive patient safety committee, staffed by hospital leaders. And furthermore, BWH routinely gives patients and their families a voice in [medical errors](#) through Safety Matters, an original monthly newsletter for caregivers that describes errors and what steps BWH is taking to prevent errors from reoccurring.

"The patient point of view is engrained in the culture of Brigham and Women's," said Welch. "I encourage other hospitals to consider programs like these that will promote and protect patient safety by welcoming input from patients and their families."

Provided by Brigham and Women's Hospital

Citation: Emergency physician's loss sparks advocacy (2012, December 4) retrieved 16 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-12-emergency-physician-loss-advocacy.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--