Residents Leading the Way to Improve Quality

Becoming a senior resident physician has more to do with developing the skills to navigate complex medical systems than reciting medical textbooks from cover to cover. If you are unable to deliver the appropriate care, medical knowledge is useless, and can even be harmful to the patient. Residency offers very little in the way of formal training on the skills needed to prevent harm to our patients or on how to deliver the best possible care. Up to 98,000 patients die every year in the United States due to systems failures, lack of training on practical skills and inadequate patient safety protocols. Fortunately, in response to a growing body of evidence, residency education is slowly beginning to change. The ACGME has started a major push through Project Clinical Learning Environment Review (CLER) to require residency programs to incorporate formal education on patient safety and the practical skills needed to deliver better care.

I am very proud of the work I have done on resident-led quality improvement and patient safety with the Committee of Interns and Residents (CIR) Union during my three years at the University of New Mexico Hospital (UNMH). The national CIR conference has been instrumental in providing guidance and support for our local efforts here at UNM. As the local CIR chapter we have worked with hospital administration over the past three years to fund resident quality improvement projects, send two residents to a fully funded patient safety conference in Telluride, CO and to fund a guest lecture by Christopher Landrigan, MD, a national expert on handoffs. We also created the UNM Journal of Quality in Healthcare to increase awareness of the importance of resident involvement in quality improvement and to showcase current resident projects.

Much of the work included in this journal is resident-initiated. It showcases the ways residents have used their energy and time to make the UNMH healthcare system more patient-centered, efficient and safe. I would like to thank everyone for their dedication and hard work in improving the challenging medical system we all work in as residents staffing a safety-net hospital. The national and local chapters of CIR will continue to advocate to secure funding and education to support quality improvement at UNMH. I look forward to seeing how CIR and its member residents will work with the hospital administration and the graduate medical education office to continue to improve the quality of care we all provide.

Sincerely,

JIMMY HEILMAN, MD
Editor, UNM Journal of Quality Improvement in Healthcare
Chair, CIR Quality Improvement Committee and CIR Elected Delegate
Resident, Department of Emergency Medicine, University of New Mexico

---