



Risk Management SNAPSHOT

Current issues and trends for
practice managers



Do your patients know the signs and symptoms of a myocardial infarction?

Many adults are unaware of the signs and symptoms of a myocardial infarction and many are not certain of the appropriate response when faced with signs and symptoms. Are your providers taking steps to educate their patients?

[A study published in JAMA Network](#) finds that while there are a significant number of adults who do not know the signs and symptoms of an MI, these numbers are even higher among individuals who are non-Hispanic blacks, Hispanics, those born outside of the US and those with lower socioeconomic status, lower education levels and without private insurance.

Providing health information to patients in a way they understand is an important aspect of high quality care. Medical Mutual's practice tip [Health Literacy](#) provides useful information and resources on how to present information to your patients in a manner they can understand.

When patients call your office with questions about symptoms they are experiencing, it is critically important that your staff respond appropriately. Our practice tip [Telephone Triage Systems](#) will give your staff guidance on how to direct patient calls.

Are your providers prescribing antibiotics appropriately?

Antibiotic resistance is a major health risk worldwide. Inappropriate antibiotic prescribing is a contributing factor in the ongoing problem.

A study published in the BMJ, looked at [antibiotic prescribing in ambulatory settings](#) and found that 25% of antibiotic prescriptions were prescribed for inappropriate indicators, such as influenza symptoms and another 18% were prescribed without any indicators documented. The study identified the most common characteristics not only of providers most likely to prescribe inappropriately, but also patients who most commonly receive inappropriate antibiotics.

Medical Mutual's practice tip [Medication Safety](#) provides helpful resources to promote safe medication practices.

Does your staff ask for two patient identifiers before caring for a patient?

The Joint Commission and other patient safety organizations agree that in order to assure appropriate patient identification, two patient identifiers must be used before any test or procedure. One identifier is not enough, as was the case with Tyler Ennis, a hockey player with the Toronto Maple Leafs.

While Tyler Ennis is not as common a name as say, John Smith, he does share a name with another professional athlete. The other athlete is a professional basketball player. Both Tylers sustained leg fractures and both were being treated in Toronto. This [TSN article](#) reveals how a lack of appropriate patient identifiers could have resulted in a wrong patient/wrong procedure sentinel event.

For more information on patient identifiers, read the [Joint Commission's Standards FAQ](#).

Improving healthcare for transgender and gender nonconforming patients.

Transgender and gender nonconforming patients face limited access to healthcare services and poor patient outcomes. One healthcare system engaged their community to find a better way to serve this vulnerable population.

This article in [The Joint Commission Journal for Quality and Patient Safety](#) reports on how the Vanderbilt Program for LGBTQ Health developed a system to improve the health of their transgender and gender nonconforming patients. The model created by Vanderbilt can be adopted by other healthcare systems interested in improving the quality of care for this population.

Could providers be sued for their past opioid prescribing practices?

Several pharmacy chains are facing federal litigation for their role in the national opioid epidemic. These chains are claiming that physician prescribing practices are the real cause of the crisis and if found liable they plan to go after physicians for some of the damages.

[An article in the Washington Post](#) points out that the physicians in the suit are as yet, unnamed, but will be named if these chains lose their case. The article goes on to say that bringing physicians into the case could be a strategy the pharmacy chains are using to complicate the case and make it more difficult for the plaintiffs to recover a settlement.

Medical Mutual's practice tip [Opioids and Chronic Pain Control: Avoiding Risks When Prescribing Medication Therapy in the Primary Care Practice](#), provides helpful information to promote safe prescribing practices.