

HEALTH CARE

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Health Care: News and Information is a service of the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) to help our readers stay fully informed about the latest health care issues as we work to advance a high-quality health care system.

Jim Edwards, Editor

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Health IT Improves Medical Outcomes

A new study has found that patients tend to have better outcomes when treated at a hospital that uses health IT.

- Florida State University researchers analyzed the patient safety and health information technology connection. It's the most comprehensive report of its kind.
- Researchers compared overall adoption of IT with patient discharge information for 98 Florida hospitals.
- The research was published in the November/December Journal of Healthcare Management.

It's for certain: Health IT can definitely contribute to patient safety gains in the hospital setting.

- "We found that the more information systems adopted at a given hospital, the better that hospital performed on a variety of important patient outcome measures," the lead researcher told the Sun-Sentinel.
- These findings point to HIT's potential for preventing medical errors and increasing patient safety. Hospitals that use IT more also come out better on patient safety measures. This is true of public and private, rural and urban institutions.
- For instance, hospitals that use HIT in the process of treating patients see fewer deaths from postoperative blood infections. Nationally, such deaths have doubled in the past two decades.
- IT helps improve patient safety by providing updated patient records, standardized medical order sets and evidence-based "best practices" guidelines.

Health care leaders believe that health IT can and will improve patient safety. This report bears out that belief. The FSU researcher said, "The evidence we found is a compelling reason for hospitals to make sure they are utilizing the most up-to-date information systems." A compelling reason indeed! Policymakers should promote the widespread adoption of health IT. It would be well worth the investment, in terms of patient outcomes, quality improvement and reduction of medical errors.

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The Healthcare Leadership Council, representing the innovators in each sector of the health care industry, is committed to advancing a market-based health care system that values innovation and provides affordable, high-quality care.

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