

ECRI's *Strategic Insights for Ambulatory Care* newsletter is being offered to CAPIC insureds at no cost. If you are interested in visiting any of the links in this edition, please contact Brad Dunkin, Assistant Vice President, at BDunkin@CAPphysicians.com.



April 9, 2024

Strategic Insights for Ambulatory Care is a biweekly service provided by ECRI and the Cooperative of American Physicians (CAP). We welcome your comments; please send them to AmbulatoryCareRM@ecri.org.



Upcoming Webinar

Fear of Discovery: How PSOs Provide a Secure Environment for Safety Work

Join **ECRI and Andrew Bolin, JD, of Bolin Law Group** on Wednesday, May 8, at 1:00 p.m. ET as we discuss establishing Patient Safety Evaluation Systems, their relationships to PSOs, the differences between state and federal protections, and how to work with surveyors who request information protected under the Act.



It's been 19 years since the Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act of 2005 facilitated the formation of Patient Safety Organizations or PSOs, in an effort to reduce the incident of adverse events and improve the quality of care for patients. PSOs provide a federally protected environment, where leaders can complete vital safety work to enhance the quality of care without fear of discovery. But what work is protected? How can hospitals, health systems, senior care providers, and ambulatory leaders ensure that they are appropriately collecting, managing, and analyzing safety-related information?

During this webinar, attorney Andrew Bolin of Bolin Law Group will discuss the legal protections afforded to providers and what they mean on a day-to-day, case-by-case basis. He will also dissect real-world cases to explain the protections available to healthcare organizations and how to ensure that your organization is taking the appropriate steps to protect your safety work.

[Register Now!](#)

What's New?

- ECRI Blog: ECRI's Top 10 Patient Safety Concerns for 2024 [read now](#)

Spotlight: Barriers to Access Maternal and Perinatal Care

ECRI named [Barriers to Access Maternal and Perinatal Care](#) third on the list of top ten patient safety concerns this year. Barriers to maternal and perinatal care contribute to preventable maternal deaths and the increasing US maternal mortality rate—currently ranked the worst among affluent countries. About 1,200 patients die annually and another 50,000 suffer pregnancy-related complications or severe morbidity.



Read the [article and action recommendations](#), download the [scorecard](#), and use our [interactive customizable risk map](#).

Patient Safety & Relations

Suicidal Behavior among Caregivers of People with Dementia

What's the news. The prevalence of suicidal behavior among those who care for people with dementia ranged from 4.7% to 26% and risk factors included high caregiver burden, greater emotional burnout, lack of social support, and history of preexisting illness; however, the risk of suicidal behavior among people with dementia

was inconsistent, but may be lower when the individual has greater cognitive decline, according to a [study published March 14, 2024, in *BMC Geriatrics*](#).

Why it matters. Understanding risk factors for suicidal behavior among caregivers and people with dementia can help providers assess suicide risk for these populations and offer strategies to mitigate such risks.

How ECRI can help. The guidance article [Dementia Care in Aging Services](#) discusses risks that may arise if dementia care is not optimized and outlines essential components of a person-centered approach.

Higher PC Shortages Lead to Higher Rates of Emergency Surgery, Serious Complications, and Readmissions

What's the news. Medicare beneficiaries living in areas with greater primary-care (PC) workforce shortages had higher rates of emergency surgery (37.8% versus 29.9%), serious complications (14.9% versus 11.7%), and readmissions (15.7% versus 13.5%) compared with rates in areas with the least severe shortages, according to a [study published March 2024 in *Health Affairs*](#).

Why it matters. Staffing shortages contribute to employee burnout and often result in delays in care, increasing risks of patient harm and organizational liability.

How ECRI can help. ECRI named [Staffing Shortages](#) as one of its top 10 patient safety concerns in 2022.

Study: Cost, Needle Phobia Common Barriers to Vaccination among Older Adults

What's the news. Cost (27.2%) and needle phobia (24.1%) were the most reported barriers to vaccination among older adults across North Dakota, according to a [study in the March 2024 issue of *Aging and Health Research*](#). Cost was associated with shingles vaccine uptake, and needle phobia was associated with uptake of all vaccines except for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Why it matters. Understanding barriers to vaccination among older adults can help organizations identify and implement strategies to increase vaccination rates.

How ECRI can help. The resource collection [Vaccine and Immunization](#) contains guidance articles, tools, and more to assist organizations in ensuring their vaccination programs are effective.

JAMA: Child Maltreatment Primary Care Interventions Still Worthwhile despite Lack of Evidence

What's the news. Current evidence is insufficient to determine whether primary care-feasible or referable behavioral counseling interventions to prevent child

maltreatment among pediatric patients without signs or symptoms of maltreatment are effective, according to a [March 19, 2024, US Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement](#). However, as a [March 19, 2024, JAMA editorial](#) states, primary care prevention efforts should continue, as a lack of evidence does not mean such interventions are ineffective, only that the evidence is lacking.

Why it matters. Healthcare organizations should be at the vanguard of efforts to curb child abuse. Children are often brought to ambulatory care centers, and physicians, nurses, social workers, and administrators are responsible for identifying and reporting suspicions of abuse. Providers who fail to report suspected child abuse face possible criminal and civil liability, including liability for malpractice.

How ECRI can help. The guidance article [Child Abuse Reporting](#) examines requirements for child abuse reporting by providers in physician practices and other settings, including signs, symptoms, and risk factors for abuse and neglect; the obligation to report; protections for good-faith reporting; and documentation and other procedures to ensure timely, effective reporting.

EHR-Based Assessment Predicts Critical Illness in Older Adults

What's the news. An electronic health record (EHR)-based elders risk assessment (ERA) score was able to predict critical illness—defined as death or ICU admission—within one year of primary care visits in older adult patients, according to a [study published March 7, 2024, in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*](#).

Why it matters. Assessments like the ERA can help providers identify patients at high risk of critical illness and implement preventive strategies to promote their well-being.

How ECRI can help. The guidance article [Electronic Health Records: Functionality](#) addresses risks associated with the functionality of EHR technology and offers action recommendations that organizations can use to mitigate risk and improve patient care.

Legal & Regulatory

EPA Will Limit Ethylene Oxide Emissions

What's the news. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is imposing new restrictions on ethylene oxide emissions, a gas widely used to sterilize medical devices in commercial sterilization facilities, according to [the agency's March 14, 2024, regulatory documents](#). The rule will require continuous monitoring and quarterly reporting of ethylene oxide emissions and establish requirements for other types of emissions not currently regulated, such as room air emissions. These reductions are critical for communities living near commercial sterilization facilities that have

disproportionately suffered from local air pollution, according to an [EPA fact sheet on the rule](#).

Why it matters. Ethylene oxide is a human carcinogen, and evidence shows that people who are regularly exposed to it over many years are at increased risk of certain cancers, including cancers of the white blood cells and breast cancer, according to a [2023 EPA article](#).

How ECRI can help. The guidance article [Environmental Safety and Security](#) discusses how physician offices can ensure environmental safety at office sites.



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