

Out of Hours

Dangerous Ideas

Improving the quality of Significant Event Audit by involving the patients

The Society for Academic Primary Care invited submissions of 'Dangerous Ideas' at its annual scientific meeting in July. This article is the second in a short series of the best of these.

1. What is the actual idea?

We propose that, when a GP practice intends to perform a Significant Event Audit (SEA) for any reason, they inform the patient that this is taking place; invite them to comment on the SEA, including inviting them to the SEA meeting; and send them a copy of the final SEA report.

IT'S MY LIFE — THE EVENT HAPPENED TO ME! WHAT DO YOU MEAN, THE PRACTICE MADE A MISTAKE AND I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW? WHY WOULDN'T YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT I THINK?!

2. Why is it terribly dangerous?

There are many potential negative implications, including a lack of engagement by the GPs with the SEA process, fearing complaint and litigation; a misunderstanding by the patient that something has gone wrong, leading to complaint and litigation; a change in GP practice towards risk adversity; a rise in medical indemnity fees; exacerbation of the recruitment difficulties currently observed in primary care; all these factors leading to damage to the doctor–patient relationship.

BUT IF YOU HAD TOLD ME IN THE FIRST PLACE I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO UPSET; WHY COULDN'T YOU JUST EXPLAIN THAT THE PRACTICE WANTED MY INPUT TO THEIR LEARNING? NOW I KNOW YOU ARE JUST COVERING UP!

3. Why must it be done ... what are the tremendous benefits that warrant taking this great risk?

SEA has the potential to significantly improve patient safety in primary care, although at the moment this potential is limited by the absence of the patient voice and shared decision making in the investigation, which is biased by only analysing information that has been recorded rather than what was actually said and done.

I WAS REALLY GLAD THAT THE PRACTICE CONTACTED ME — AFTER ALL THE HASSLE WITH MY PRESCRIPTION IT WAS GOOD TO KNOW THAT THE PRACTICE WERE TRYING TO AVOID FUTURE PROBLEMS

MR. "I AM NOT MIDDLE CLASS I'M JUST MAD AT YOUR PATRONISING ATTITUDE" SAYS 'THE SILLY IDEA IS NOT INCLUDING ME IN MY OWN SEA!'

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