

# THE NATIONAL QUALITY FORUM

## SAFE PRACTICES FOR BETTER HEALTHCARE: 2009 UPDATE

### PURPOSE

In 2003, the National Quality Forum (NQF) endorsed a set of 30 safe practices that should be universally utilized in applicable clinical care settings to reduce the risk of harm to patients. In 2006, NQF undertook an update of the original set and endorsed a set of practices with significantly expanded specifications, supporting literature, and guidance for implementation. Over the next year, NQF will undertake a second update to review the evidence base for existing practices, strengthen implementation guidance, update research recommendations, and evaluate new practices to ensure that the set remains current and appropriate.

### BACKGROUND

The NQF-endorsed™ Safe Practices are a set of voluntary consensus standards that serve as a tool for healthcare providers, purchasers, and consumers to identify and encourage practices that will reduce errors and improve care. These practices were not intended to capture all activities that might reduce adverse healthcare events; rather they focus on practices that: 1) have strong evidence that they are effective in reducing the likelihood of harming a patient; 2) are generalizable (i.e. they may be applied in multiple clinical care settings and/or multiple types of patients); 3) are likely to have a significant benefit to patient safety if fully implemented; and 4) have knowledge about them that is usable by consumers, purchasers, providers, and researchers.

### SCOPE

Maintenance of the set of practices will include:

- Review of the NQF-endorsed safe practices and supporting literature for continued currency and appropriateness and modification of practices as needed
- Recommendation of new safe practices for endorsement, particularly in the following priority areas:
  - Practices that correspond with prevention of the NQF-endorsed™ Serious Reportable Events
  - Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infection prevention and management
  - Urinary catheter-associated urinary tract infection prevention and management
  - Organ donorship
  - Healthcare worker safety
  - Pre-operative briefing
  - Care transitions, a.k.a., “handoffs” or “handovers”
  - Rapid response teams
  - Simulation-based training
- Identification of practices that warrant further research and investigation for potential future inclusion in the set

### THE NQF PROCESS

The maintenance process, like all NQF activities, involves the active participation of representatives from across the spectrum of healthcare stakeholders. The project is guided by the Consensus Standards Maintenance Committee, which will evaluate the practices and make recommendations to refresh the currently endorsed set. The revised set and accompanying recommendations will be endorsed through NQF’s formal consensus development process.

### FUNDING

This project will be funded in part by a grant from the Texas Medical Institute for Technology.

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