

## Leapfrog Safety Score Highlights Petaluma Valley's Healing Legacy

**By Nora Haile**

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Petaluma Valley Hospital, part of St. Joseph Health in Sonoma County, recently garnered a top hospital safety score of "A" from the Leapfrog Group. The hospital, just 40 miles north of San Francisco off the 101 freeway, is an 80-bed acute and critical care hospital that offers 24-hour emergency and outpatient services. The Leapfrog Group, an independent national non-profit founded by employers and healthcare experts to promote transparency and safety of healthcare information, bases the score or "grades" on evidence-based data the organization has obtained through publicly available measures. The score is derived from information of how a hospital keeps patients safe from infections, injuries, medical and medication errors. The organization, which also rewards hospitals that consistently demonstrate high quality care, is the creator and administrator of the Hospital Safety Score website. The site gives healthcare consumers a place to quickly check on how a

particular hospital rates safety-wise.

The "A" Hospital Safety Score came on the heels of a highly successful internal venture to achieve what St. Joseph Health hospitals refer to as "perfect care" in complying with



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**Nancy Corda, RN CCRN**

core measures of patient safety as tracked by CMS. Petaluma Valley Hospital's team focused on Acute Myocardial Infarction, Pneumonia, Surgical Care Improvement Project aims and Stroke, reaching the CMS Core Measures with perfect scores for 12 consecutive months. Nancy Corda, RN, CCRN, Director of Inpatient Nursing and manager of Petaluma Valley's ICU and Med/Surgery credited frontline staff as the force behind the hospital's success with clinical quality and patient safety initiatives. "We conduct an annual house-wide Patient Safety Culture Survey where staff can spotlight successes and opportunities for patient care and safety improvement. They point out what they think works and doesn't work, raising concerns as well as providing solution recommendations that they then get to see implemented."

Corda noted progress made in several key areas due to the 2012 Survey, such as connecting bed alarms to the call light system, shortening caregiver response time. "With patients who are a

high fall risk, as soon as the alarm goes off, staff sees the call light and can go straight to that room. We also increased rounding, which is focused on compliance with best practices to prevent patient falls.” Petaluma Valley Hospital RNs also take part in combined preventative education related to central line associated infections with concurrent auditing by PICC RNs, underscoring compliance with infection control practices. Then there is their eICU monitoring system, which has allowed the hospital to easily audit best practice compliance for preventing ventilator-associated pneumonia among their critical care patients. She added that the eICU monitoring has also been used for compliance auditing related to prophylaxis for venous thromboembolism.

Jane Read, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, Vice President of Operations at Petaluma Valley Hospital, believes the example of the leadership team, which has oversight for both Santa Rosa and Petaluma Valley Hospitals, has provided a firm foundation for the culture of patient safety. With a governance that’s committed to the total care of patient’s “body, mind, spirit”, the Sonoma County organization has assured that staff have what they need to take care of patients. “Our organization has been intent on providing a safe environment for both patients and

staff. It’s the mission of our overall ministry.”



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**Jane Read, MSN RN, NEA-BC**

That deeply held organizational commitment to a safe environment also led to the Joint Commission recognizing Petaluma Valley in the top 7% last year in key clinical quality measures, due to their improved outcomes related to evidence-based practices for patients receiving surgical care or treatment for heart attack or pneumonia. That level of recognition from a leading accreditor, combined with the Leapfrog Hospital Safety

Score, has underscored the success of St. Joseph’s practice of shared governance councils. “The aides on the team identify any problems in the unit and then come up with suggestions for solutions. It involves the entire unit, nurses aides, RNs, telemetry techs,” Corda emphasized. “Our nurses aides are hugely contributive to patient safety, because they know when they speak up, they’ll be heard. It’s a very different, more constructive problem-solving process than when managers just solve issues without hearing from the people who are on the floor with patients.”

It should be noted that in a smaller hospital like Petaluma Valley, measures and their associated percentage points can have a much greater impact when they move in one direction or the other. Adherence to best practices, continuous monitoring and corrective adjustments in a non-punitive environment – with commitment to safety from the people providing the care, have made the real difference. The St. Joseph Health, Sonoma County leadership and frontline staff are representative of the success of shared governance teams, and the positive impact the model can have on a culture of patient safety.

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