

The Patient in Patient Safety

Matthew C. Mireles, Ph.D., M.P.H.

ABSTRACT

Despite the ground-breaking IOM Reports on patient safety and goals for improvement, the healthcare system still has difficulty including the patient in the espoused patient-centered medicine and practice. The author discusses the organizational concept of Community of Competence™ (developed and trademarked by Elizabeth Smith, Ph.D.) to emphasize the unique role of the patient within this Community and the patient-centered healthcare system. Patients and their support network should be considered as valuable members of the Community and be allowed to be engaged and participate in medical decisions and the course of actions if the goals for improvement of safety and quality are truly patient-centered.

At the same time, the patient and family must understand their responsibility to be informed and engaged in the medical care process. One important and simple way to participate in the process is to be prepared for medical appointments. The author offers a practical two-page *Patient Safety Checklist*® to help the patient prepare for a medical appointment and facilitate better communication between the patient and care provider.

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Dr. Matthew Mireles is the President and CEO of Community Medical Foundation for Patient Safety, 6300 West Loop South, Suite 288, Bellaire, TX 77401.

mcmireles@comofcom.com