

From the Editor's Desk

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The theme of the fall issue of *The Ochsner Journal* is quality improvement and patient safety. While quality is not a new concept in healthcare, our approach to quality and the emphasis on patient safety are undergoing transformation. The scientific methodology of quality improvement and safety, often used in other industries, is now being applied to medicine. Technological advancements, transparency, accountability, and informed consumers are shaping how we approach problems and develop solutions in our healthcare delivery systems.

The landmark 1999 report *To Err Is Human: Building a Safer Health System* from the U.S. Institute of Medicine was a catalyst for change in this country. The report estimated that between 44,000 and 98,000 people die each year as a result of preventable medical errors.

The new approach to patient safety that followed the report's publication is part of the evolution away from authority and paternalism and toward everyone being accountable as active participants in healthcare. Patient safety—with its emphasis on teamwork, respect, and transparency—can provide important leadership strategies for the transformation.

In this issue, 2 articles highlight the concept of just culture: the Bioethics in Practice column written by Drs Dauterive and Schubert followed by an article written by Dr Boysen. The theme of just culture interventions is to create systems that help caregivers follow every step known to improve patient care and to avoid relying on fallible human memory. To err may be human, but it is also often preventable.

This issue contains a number of articles contributed by medical students, residents, and fellows in training. The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education recognized the need for graduate medical training to emphasize the responsibility of the sponsoring institution for the quality and safety of the environment for learning and patient care. The goal is to deliver both high-quality physicians and higher quality and safer patient care that will continue after graduation.

The Alliance of Independent Academic Medical Centers (AIAMC)—of which Ochsner has been a member since shortly after the founding of the AIAMC in 1989—developed the National Initiative (NI), the first national and multiinstitutional effort to focus on the alignment of medical education with hospital quality and safety strategies. Special thanks go to Dr Ronald Amedee, Vice President of the AIAMC Board of Directors and Designated Institutional Official and Chairman, Department of Otolaryngology at the Ochsner Clinic Foundation, for encouraging the submission of 5 articles to this issue by AIAMC member institutions.

Additionally, this issue includes an Introduction to Research Day by Dr Sohail Rao, the abstracts from Research Day, and an overview of research at Ochsner by Dr Richard Re. We hope you enjoy the photographs from Research Day that are included.

I would like to personally thank all of our contributors, including members from the AIAMC, the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center School of Public Health, the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, and my Ochsner colleagues.