

How do we improve perceptions of safety?

Your PRC Patient Experience Study asks patients, “How would you rate your overall safety? Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, or Poor?” This safety question is one of the most common Key Drivers of Excellence® for how patients feel about their overall quality of care in PRC’s National Patient Databases. Simply stated, to impact patients’ overall perceptions of their experience, we need to improve their perceptions of safety. Follow these steps to improve how your patients perceive safety:

Step 1: Understand your survey results.

A large percentage of your patients are generally satisfied with safety. In other words, most patients are responding “good” or better on the response scale. It is important to consider things beyond what problems need to be *fixed* and consider things that can be *improved*, *add value*, and *wow* patients.

PRC’s reporting tools on PRCEasyView.com® focus on excellence. In many graphs, only the percentage of patients that responded “excellent” to the safety question is shown. In other graphs, percentile rankings are displayed. Percentile rankings consider only those patients that responded with the top box of “excellent.” If all patients rated their safety as “very good,” the ranking would be 0. PRC focuses on the top box because when a patient responds their overall quality of care is “excellent,” they are 4 times more likely to be loyal to your organization.

Step 2: Define what safety means to YOUR patients.

Talk to your patients and staff to understand what is problematic to patients and what impresses them with regards to safety. The definition of “safety” varies based on the individual patient, location of care, type of care, treatment, etc. Initiatives that address patient perceptions of safety in the inpatient setting might involve the following:

- medication errors
- hand washing
- security of personal belongings
- physical safety
- personal security
- emotional safety
- getting help when needed / responsiveness to call light
- clutter
- teamwork between providers
- communication of safety issues
- privacy
- attentiveness of staff

Voices® on PRCEasyView.com can be a useful tool here, too. Try filtering by “safety” in improvement comments to see if patients have any ideas, and to clue you and your staff into what they are thinking about when they think of safety.



Step 3: Develop an action plan based on YOUR patients' definition of safety and communicate to your patients.

Improving safety from your patients' perspectives requires communication. When working to improve perceptions, it's not enough to reduce errors or improve compliance with hand washing, for example, we have to find a way to tell patients how we prioritize their safety. When designing improvement plans, high performing organizations answer these questions: "What can we do to make this environment safer?" and "How can we communicate more effectively to patients about safety?"

