

Nearly One-in-Five Iowa Patients Experience Medical Errors

Clive, Iowa – January 8, 2018 – Although a vast majority of Iowans have positive experiences with the healthcare system in Iowa, nearly one-in-five Iowa adults (18.8 percent) report having experienced a medical error either personally, or with someone close to them during the past five years.

This finding comes from a new Iowa survey released today by Heartland Health Research Institute of Clive, Iowa. The first of its kind in Iowa, this statewide survey – *The Iowa Patient Safety Study – Iowans' Views on Medical Errors*© – was conducted from May 11 to June 6, 2017. A total of 1,010 Iowa adults age 18 and over took part.

Of the 18.8% of Iowans who experienced an error, 60 percent were not told by the responsible healthcare provider that an error had occurred. The survey finds that hospitals are the most frequent site of medical errors (59 percent), while 30 percent of errors occurred in a doctor's office or clinic, four percent in nursing homes and seven percent at some other location.

Other key highlights for all Iowans surveyed, whether they experienced a medical error or not, include:

- Nearly 90 percent of Iowans “Strongly agree” that providers should be required to tell patients of any medical error.
- Eighty percent of Iowans “Strongly agree” that Iowa hospitals should be required to report all medical errors to a state agency, and 74 percent “Strongly agree” that Iowa doctors should be required to report all medical errors to a state agency.
- Ninety-three percent of Iowans “Somewhat agree” (30 percent) or “Strongly agree” (63 percent) the public should have access to medical error information for each hospital and doctor.
- Sixty-one percent of Iowans with no medical error history are likely to believe their personal doctor would tell them if a medical error occurred, but only 41 percent of Iowans who have experienced a medical error believe this is true.
- Iowans believe medical errors are primarily caused by overworked medical staff, lack of care coordination and poor communication.
- About a quarter of Iowans (24 percent) believe there are fewer errors today than five years ago, whereas 18 percent believe there are more errors now. About one-third of Iowans felt the frequency of errors has not changed in five years.

Iowans who have experienced a medical error in the past five years reported:

- The most common type of medical errors were mistakes made during a test, surgery or treatment, as well as misdiagnosis.
- When experiencing a medical error, six-in-10 respondents believe a serious health consequence resulted and nearly one-third reported serious financial consequences resulted.
- Ninety percent of those experiencing a medical error believe the medical error was preventable.
- Sixty-two percent of those who experienced a medical error reported the error, while one-third did not report the error. Almost two-thirds of those who did not report said they simply didn't think reporting the error would do any good.

- Almost 90 percent of Iowans who reported the medical error did so because they wanted to prevent the same error from happening to someone else. Only 25 percent said they reported the error to receive compensation for the harm.
- Of those experiencing medical errors, 35 percent of Iowans indicated that a medical error was made in his/her own care, while 57 percent reported that error was made in the care of someone else in whose care they were closely involved

“The prevalence of medical errors in our country remains a public health crisis, and the findings of this study clearly demonstrate that Iowa is not immune from this serious problem. Iowans strongly feel that medical errors must not be hidden from the public and should be reported, both to the patient and to an appropriate regulatory agency,” says David P. Lind, President of Heartland Health Research Institute. “Quality of healthcare will only improve when leadership, organizational culture and patient engagement are fully aligned. When seeking healthcare, patients deserve truthful, timely and transparent information about medical errors.”

About the Survey

The *Iowa Patient Safety Study – Iowans’ Views on Medical Errors*® was conducted from May 11 to June 6, 2017. Results are based on a representative sample of 1,010 Iowa adults age 18+. Interviews were completed using telephone-based data collection, with 451 completed interviews on numbers called using random digit dialing of landlines with Iowa’s area codes. In addition, 559 interviews were completed using cell phones. For the overall sample, the results are accurate to within plus or minus 3.1 percent, at a 95 percent confidence level. The study methods used permit the results to provide estimates of all Iowa adults. Data Point Research, Inc. (DPR) provided the interviewing, statistical analysis and mathematical basis for the study. Funding for this study was provided by David P. Lind, as President of Heartland Health Research Institute and was undertaken as a public service, with no financial, political, professional, personal or other bias inherent therein. A full report is available at HHRI.net.

About Heartland Health Research Institute

Heartland Health Research Institute (HHRI) is an independent, nonpartisan and nonprofit research organization based in Clive, Iowa. HHRI is organized as a public benefit 501(c)(3) corporation that conducts research and analysis on a broad spectrum of healthcare issues. Topics specifically focus on the patient’s perspective – measuring their confidence and trust in the healthcare system today and into the future. To learn more about HHRI, visit HHRI.net.

About Data Point Research, Inc.

Data Point Research (DPR) is an independent full-service research organization dedicated to improving the lives of others. DPR provides precise, neutral, detailed and easy-to-read analysis for clients. Founded in 1997, DPR collects, analyzes, and provides clients with the information needed to make solid, well-informed decisions in the areas of social policy, health and employee benefits.

###

Press Contact:

David P. Lind, President
Heartland Health Research Institute
Phone: (515) 868-0920
Email: david@dplindbenchmark.com
Web: HHRI.net