

**How Digital Policy
Management Can Make
Compliance A Competitive
Advantage**



TODAY'S CONUNDRUM:

For hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers, and health systems, consistent regulatory and accreditation compliance is vital to protect patients, reputation, and revenue.

Yet many facilities face compliance risk because they still use an inefficient and error-prone process to create and manage the policies and procedures designed to ensure exceptional care and patient safety.

No wonder everyone from senior leaders to patient-facing teams looks at compliance as a necessary evil that spawns frustration and confusion, leading to low staff morale and potentially-compromised patient safety.

However, this eBook will help you and your teams see compliance as a critical strategy rather than an additional burden placed on those who may already be feeling overextended.

To support this objective, we'll explain the role of digital policy and procedure management in helping to provide outstanding patient care as well as its role in improving audit performance and ultimately, the impact it can have on the quality ratings patients give to your healthcare organization.

The connection between improved audit scores around document compliance and how patients rate both the quality of the care they receive and their likelihood to recommend your facility is more direct than you might imagine.

Given the role compliance plays in how hospitals receive funding, attract patients, and ensure safety, it's fitting that the first chapter in the latest installment of our eBook series begins with what leaders from The Joint Commission consider to be the five accreditation survey mistakes you don't want to make.

The material in Chapter 1 also details proven ways to help you avoid making them.

CHAPTER 1: FIVE SURVEY MISTAKES TO AVOID



According to a blog on [Becker's Healthcare Review](#) that offers unique insight into the minds of surveyors courtesy of two executives from The Joint Commission, most survey deficiencies result when one or more of the following breakdowns are found:

Mistake 1. Lacking a safety culture

Mark Pelletier, COO of accreditation and certification operations, and Tom Barton, a Field Director, stated, "Without leadership support and staff engagement in a culture that focuses on safety and quality, hospitals are more likely to either be deficient in certain standards or meet the letter of the law without accepting the full meaning of the standard, which can ultimately jeopardize safety."

HOW TO AVOID THIS MISTAKE: *Make it easy for your staff to locate critical safety documents and confirm that they are using the latest policy. Create scannable documents that can be accessed digitally, anytime and from anywhere.*

HOW MIGRATING TO A DIGITAL POLICY MANAGEMENT SOLUTION CAN HELP: *Migrating to a collaborative cloud-based policy management platform is proven to **reduce the potential for errors** and misunderstanding with simply-designed, clearly-formatted documents that are easy to author, maintain, and distribute. Most of all, implementing a digital policy management system sends the message to surveyors that your hospital is committed to giving staff the tools they need to protect patient safety and comply with all state and federal regulations.*

Mistake 2. Not being prepared

"Barton suggests hospitals prepare by doing mock surveys to assess their compliance and to ease anxiety during the survey. Having the requisite documents on hand and organized will also ease the day-of survey process.

However, hospitals should not assess their compliance only for the surveys. The purpose of an accreditation survey is to ensure organizations provide safe, effective care. Therefore, hospitals should approach survey preparedness as a way to improve the organization rather than as a daunting task to complete every three years."

And as we'll discuss later, preparation for a survey can have a significant impact on how patients rate your hospital.

In an era of hyper-transparency and digitally-empowered consumers, how your hospital stacks up on quality dimensions, such as patients who report they "always" received help as soon as they wanted it, can attract new patients or drive them to your competition.

HOW TO AVOID THIS MISTAKE: *During an audit, make sure you can instantly produce any policy or procedure document the surveyors request. Otherwise, they see it as a red flag and will likely assume your hospital's compliance practices lack integrity.*

HOW A DIGITAL POLICY MANAGEMENT SOLUTION CAN HELP:

A digital policy management platform makes it easy to replace policy documents created in Word with HTML-formatted documents that can be keyword-searched and quickly located during an audit or an event that requires guidance for a critical or sensitive decision.

"Organizations we find that do really well are ones who are embracing quality and safety and not just doing [something] because the standard tells them to."

- Tom Barton, RN, Field Director at The Joint Commission

Mistake 3. Failing to meet environment of care and life safety standards

“Environment of care and life safety standards are some of the most common standards hospitals miss, according to The Joint Commission.

Pelletier suggests developing policies and procedures for supervising contractors. He also suggests leaders assess the environment of care when they do leadership rounds to discuss safety with staff.”

HOW TO AVOID THIS MISTAKE: *In many hospital settings, developing new policies and procedures can take up to four months and can involve dozens of senior staff, including department heads. That’s not fast enough to help staff and outside contractors keep pace with new rules. You can use the same lean principles already at work in clinical workflows to create and disseminate new policy and procedure documents that quickly get everyone aligned.*

HOW A DIGITAL POLICY MANAGEMENT SOLUTION CAN HELP: *New policies can be drafted, approved, and circulated in a few weeks, if not days. So the dozens of key people who have historically been pulled away for long meetings to approve the wording of safety procedures can now focus on implementing safety standards.*

Mistake 4. Failing to maintain records

According to the Joint Commission, in the first half of 2013, “The number one standard hospitals missed... is in the record of care, treatment and services category: RC.01.01.01, which states that the hospital maintains complete and accurate medical records for each individual patient.”

HOW TO AVOID THIS MISTAKE: *“The Joint Commission expects to see the rate of noncompliance diminish as hospitals migrate to electronic medical records.” To protect your organization, you need to ensure your staff has read and understands your policy on handling patient records.*

HOW A DIGITAL POLICY MANAGEMENT SOLUTION CAN HELP: *Authoring, tracking, and publishing tools make it simple to verify that everyone who needs to understand and follow the latest guidelines has read them and has access to the most current version.*

Mistake 5. Lack of a sufficient performance improvement plan

Anyone who's ever been through an accreditation survey knows that performance improvement plans go with the territory. Because these plans "tell surveyors how well a hospital identifies and corrects deficiencies," not having a clear plan for correcting areas of concern as well as tracking progress can create complications with reimbursement and clinical certifications.

HOW TO AVOID THIS MISTAKE: *According to Barton, The Joint Commission looks at "the integrity and completeness of the plan as well as hospitals' efforts in meeting their goals." Make sure your hospital's plan shows your "ability to identify weaknesses... and implement strategies" to fix them.*

HOW A DIGITAL POLICY MANAGEMENT SOLUTION CAN HELP: *We've helped numerous healthcare organizations overcome document management-related deficiencies, including expired documents, version control, and a lack of documentation to prove their staffs have read and understood required policies and procedures. Make sure the digital policy management platform you're considering includes automatic expiration notifications and automatic version replacement and archiving after policy updates.*

CHAPTER 2: CONSUMERS ARE PAYING ATTENTION TO PATIENTS, BUT ARE YOU?



Now that vast amounts of data can be delivered in small, relevant bites, consumers have more information at their fingertips to determine where they will become patients. Even Medicare is providing tools that are turning consumers into what we’re going to call “pro-activists.”

With the intent to encourage Americans, especially Baby Boomers, to be more actively involved in their healthcare, Medicare is developing resources like their [Hospital Compare tool](#) that allows consumers to easily compare the patient care experience ratings of hospitals within their set of choices, rather than just accepting the recommendation of their physician.

While it’s far from unanimous that using the star rating method is helping consumers make the best choices for their healthcare, for reasons we’ll discuss in the next chapter, we think it’s best to embrace the transparency and aim for five-star ratings in every category.



Consumers regularly use tools like these to find peer recommendations and now your patients are doing the same.

HOW A DIGITAL POLICY MANAGEMENT SOLUTION CAN HELP: *You can harness the power of cloud computing and digital policy and procedure management to allow shift leaders and frontline staff to deliver the kind of personalized attention that can positively impact patient satisfaction surveys. In turn, positive ratings can help your hospital, ASC, or health system emerge as a leader when consumers search for information about healthcare facilities.*

CHAPTER 3: MAKE MORE TIME FOR PATIENTS



Like it or not—and many dedicated, passionate physicians and nurses do not—when it comes to the data consumers trust to help them choose everything from their next binge-worthy series on Netflix to an ASC for a knee replacement their surgeon now recommends, the five-star rating system is increasingly the metric of choice, apart from leaving reviews on social media platforms.

We understand that sometimes it's easier said than done to get some in your organization to see the connection between implementing a digital solution for managing healthcare policies and procedures and improved patient experience ratings.

And we're mindful of the fact that facilities operating with staffs being tasked to do more with less will need an airtight business case to support any technology investment, even one that pays for itself over a relatively short period of time.

We're also confident that no stakeholder in your organization wants any patient to go home feeling confused or disgruntled. Because when that happens, your quality scores can suffer— even when patients have a good medical outcome.

Unfortunately, the demands of increased documentation and compliance requirements can sometimes cut deeply into the time available for staff to focus on patient needs.

Unfairly or not, what Medicare's Hospital Compare tool makes very clear is that patients rate the quality of your care based on the quality and the amount of time staff spends with them.



Image Source: www.medicare.gov/HospitalCompare

The pinch to spend quality and quantity time with patients can often surface in the patient's post-discharge impressions of their experience. An example might include whether the staff took enough time to make sure the patients understood their medication schedule and at-home routines and restrictions.

Simply put, in the minds of patients more one-on-one time from caregivers translates into a perception— and a ranking— of higher quality care. But in today's reimbursement climate, adding more staff isn't an option for most organizations.

And this is where a digital policy management platform helps make compliance a competitive advantage rather than a necessary evil. With a more efficient and effective solution to policy and procedure management, you can give your staff more hours in the day to spend with patients.

Balancing patient expectations and compliance demands isn't getting any easier. But investing in a compliance strategy that can help keep your facility top of mind for high-quality care among consumers who are increasingly being influenced by what patients say— and not just providers— is time and money well spent.

HOW POLICYSTAT CAN HELP: With PolicyStat you can implement a digital policy management solution that removes hundreds of hours of additional review meetings and redirect those hours into more time spent with patients. More time with patients can have a direct impact on improved patient quality rankings.

See compliance differently

If you have two minutes, watch our [demo](#) and learn how you can automatically begin to shift the thousands of hours you're spending on policy and procedure management into focusing more time on delivering exceptional care.

You can also [contact us](#) to set up a live demo and learn why we have a 99 percent client retention rate and a 99.8 percent customer support satisfaction score.