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Leveraging Health Information Technology to Improve Patient Safety

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Objectives: This article addresses the use of clinical information systems to improve patient safety within United States healthcare organizations. Additionally, it addresses the organizational strategic planning for information systems designed for the reduction of errors, improved clinical decision-making and real time access to patient information. The literature suggests that clinical information systems are necessary to improve the quality of care and foster an environment which maximizes patient safety. **Methods:** Data on the status of U.S. Hospital patient safety information systems was drawn from the 2005 HIMSS Analytics™ database. The database surveyed over 4,000 hospitals in the United States and provided extensive data on the hardware, software and information technology infrastructure within healthcare organizations. **Results:** Our research clearly documents the use of clinical information systems to improve patient safety in U.S. hospitals. Systems of particular interest include: Automated Dispensing Machine, Bar Coding, Electronic Medication Administration Record (EMAR), Computerized Patient Record (CPR), Computerized Data Repository (CDR), Point of Care Applications, Robotics and Wireless technology. From a strategic planning perspective, our research found growing interest in the following applications as documented by planned growth: Bar Coding for Medications (135%), Bar Coding for Nurses (186%), Bar Coding for Patients (150%), Computerized Physician Order Entry (68%), Electronic Medication Administration Record (21%), and Wireless Technology (18%). **Conclusions:** The increasing investment in patient safety related information systems will enhance the clinical care process and improve the quality of healthcare. These Systems when linked with other clinical information systems will significantly reduce medical errors.

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