

# Powerful Patient 2008 week 31

Host: Joyce Graff, WebTalkRadio.net

## Safeguarding Patient Safety

Peter Saltonstall, the new President of the National Organization for Rare Disorders, talks about his background in hospital administration, and the use of software systems to safeguard patient safety and to aid physicians in efficiently diagnosing disease.



Peter Saltonstall, President of NORD

### 1) About Our Guest

Peter Saltonstall served for nearly thirty years in high-level administrative positions in Boston-area hospitals, including New England Medical Center, Brigham & Women's Hospital, and St. Elizabeth's Hospital.

After a family tragedy focused his attention on medical errors, he focused full-time energy on collecting information about medical mistakes, learning from this information, and helping to ensure that those mistakes would not recur. He led SafeCare Systems, which has provided software now used by the government to collect and analyze information about medical mistakes.

### 2) About Patient Safety

The Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality (AHRQ), a division of the U.S. government Department of Health and Human Services (<http://www.ahrq.gov>) was formed to improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans.

Among other objectives, AHRQ's research assists consumers in getting objective information on how to choose health plans, doctors, or hospitals based on their performance.

Everyone in the health care environment – all hospital workers from custodian to surgeon – all have a responsibility to keep the patient safe. Every member of the health care team – including the patient – has the right to ask what is going on, speak up when they notice something that doesn't seem right, and make sure that the procedure goes extremely well.

### **3) About the National Organization for Rare Disorders**

The National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD) is a unique federation of individuals and organizations working together to build a better world for people affected by rare diseases. <http://www.rarediseases.org>

NORD recently celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Originally brought into being primarily in order to pass the Orphan Drug Act of 1983, this coalition has continued to work to encourage the development and approval of Orphan Drugs, and to make them available to those who cannot afford them. NORD funds research into rare diseases, and has compiled an authoritative compendium of information on rare diseases.

The coalition includes 156 full members, each of which has passed stringent analysis of its documents and practices, as well as a number of associate members. The membership qualification process is a good learning experience for younger organizations.

NORD funds research into a number of rare diseases, as required by the donors of these funds.

People looking for others affected by the same rare disease, or who are seeking a diagnosis, are welcome to join the NORD online community <http://nord.inspire.com>