

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Quality of Care: **PERFORM THESE SAFETY CHECKS FROM YOUR DESK**

You can actually perform some vital patient safety checks without ever leaving your computer or desk.

"Hopefully, a good occurrence report system will pick up a lot of safety issues," notes **Stephen Trosty**, director of risk management at **American Physicians Assurance Corp.** in East Lansing, MI. The MDS-generated quality indicators are also a built-in safety monitoring system that identifies falls, fractures, pressure ulcers in low-risk individuals, dehydration, avoidable weightloss, etc., notes **Duncan Maclean**, a certified medical director who consults with nursing facilities in Delaware.

Facilities can also track resident hospitalizations to look for potential patterns signaling a problem with their care protocols and delivery. "But don't simply dismiss an increased rate of hospital admissions as a by product of your facility's higher acuity case-mix," cautions **Eleanor Alvarez**, president of **LeaderStat** in Westerville, OH. For example, a high hospitalization rate for pneumonia and dehydration might signal the need to beef up your flu and pneumonia vaccination program.

In investigating its high rate of hospital admissions for residents on anticoagulants, one facility uncovered problems with its system for routine lab work, Alvarez reports. "It turned out that patients weren't receiving their routine INR screening, which was resulting in hospitalization for bleeding and other complications," she tells **Eli**. Alvarez has also worked with facilities experiencing high rates of admissions for fractures and other injuries, which prompted a major overhaul of their fall prevention and other safety programs.