

2022.11.14 HHS Convening to Advance Patient Safety

Transcript of remarks by Armando Nahum

Armando Nahum: Good afternoon, everyone. Can you hear me out there? Yes? Great. Thank you for having me here today. It's an honor and a privilege. My name is Armando Nahum. I'm a patient safety activist and I live in Atlanta, Georgia. I am a co-founder of Patients for Patient Safety U.S. and I'm here and speaking on behalf of that organization.

Please allow me to start by telling you how I got here. I belong to the very special club that no one wants to belong to. In 2006, three members of my family were impacted by hospital-associated infections and one medical error after another in three different hospitals, in three different states in 10 months' time culminating with the death of my son, Josh. Josh was 26. You know, I can stand here and try to describe to you the loss of a child and use such words as intense shock, confusion, disbelief, denial, and anger. Some experts even call it a broken heart and yet these words don't even come close in describing the actual pain. The resentment and the blame that you feel towards everyone, including yourself, are of immense proportions. And finally, extreme guilt that you have failed as your child's protector and could have done things differently almost certainly break you, never to be the same again, but today is a different day.

Today, I have different words. For the past 20 years, there has been a focus on the private-public sector in partnership to move patient safety forward. While we have seen some organizations step up to the plate, our system has not. Our federal government has not enforced its own quality standards. We need to move our country to the point where the consequences for not reporting an event or for harming a person is worse than the incentives for staying silent. We believe that patients and families are the components that need to move the work, this particular work, to the next level.

CMS Partnership for Patients gave us a brief look into that only to be taken away by other priorities. Patients and families need to be part of the research, guideline development, policy, and regulatory decisions. We have a much different view of care than clinicians. While they see a snapshot, a moment in care of that patient, we see the entire care. Patients and family engagement is the essence of patient-centered care and the most important component to drive harm to zero. Good health is fundamental to the safety and stability of our society. We believe that access to affordable, quality healthcare is a human right for all no matter one's race, ethnicity, age, social economic status, [inaudible] at any conditions; policies, beliefs, and behaviors, which provide our nation from achieving true health equity are a threat to patient safety and the public health itself.

The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the dire need for new attention to the issue of health equity, not only in the United States but globally. The lack of access to quality care, the prevalence of social and racial inequity, the social-economic determinants of health, and the shortfall of our health workforce have created barriers to a healthy and productive life for many vulnerable --

>> Female Speaker: Recording in progress.

>> Armando Nahum: -- populations. Thank you. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

In closing, Patients for Patient Safety U.S. has two distinct to ask you, Mr. Secretary. We would like you to consider having our voice at your table by establishing a council at the highest level comprised of patients and family members and healthcare professionals to ensure that patient safety is embedded into every single aspect of our care and coordinated by all federal agencies assembled here today. And equally important, never have this council to be affected by politics, regardless of any administration, and to hire healthcare systems.

To our leadership and board of directors, we expect to hold yourself and your organization accountable for keeping patient safety as the number one priority and prevent harm whenever possible. And when that happens, don't hide it, share it so others can learn. We, at Patients for Patient Safety U.S., are committed to supporting partners, policies, and protocols, which ensure that both health equity and patient safety standards are incorporated across all healthcare, public health, and industry platform for a safer and healthier system for all. Thank you very much.