

NEWS RELEASE

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Failure to Track Diagnostic Results Puts Patients at Risk

ECRI Institute's Partnership for Health IT Patient Safety releases [whitepaper and guide for closing the loop on diagnostic testing and referrals](#)

PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA—ECRI Institute's multi-stakeholder collaborative, the *Partnership for Health IT Patient Safety*, announces [new research on reducing errors](#) related to diagnostic testing and specialty referral tracking:

- **Implementing Closing the Loop Safe Practices for Diagnostic Results** describes a focused project with ambulatory care facilities
- **Close the Loop in Your Organization: A Step by Step Guide** includes practical guidance for healthcare facilities across all care settings

The *Partnership* invited ambulatory care sites to follow one of its safe practice recommendations—implement IT solutions to track key areas—for the tracking of diagnostic test results and specialty referrals. The overarching goal was to improve results tracking using the technologies at hand, and ultimately, to improve the timeliness and accuracy of diagnoses. Three sites began the process; two followed the project to completion.

“Reducing diagnostic errors requires more attention by leaders in all care settings—acute, long-term, and ambulatory,” says Marcus Schabacker, MD, PhD, president and CEO, ECRI Institute. “This research is important because it demonstrates how health IT processes can be implemented to reduce diagnostic errors.”

In the pilot project, participants used strategies and tools, including the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) *Improving Your Office Testing Process*, a toolkit that outlines steps for a testing process.

Insights gleaned from the pilot project informed the *Partnership's* development of a step-by-step guide. **Close the Loop in Your Organization** offers practical guidance on how to identify project resources, evaluate current processes, and implement change across various practice settings.

“By working collaboratively across multiple healthcare sectors, the *Partnership* is demonstrating its ability to improve health IT safety for patients,” says *Partnership* program director Lorraine Possanza, DPM, JD, MBE, ECRI Institute.

Each year, five percent of adults in the United States are subjected to a diagnostic error, and of the estimated 12 million diagnostic errors in the U.S., 20 to 30 percent are caused by breakdowns in the referral process, according to Hardeep Singh, MD, an expert advisory panel member of the *Partnership for Health IT Patient Safety*.

The [Partnership](#), sponsored in part through funding from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, leverages the work of multiple Patient Safety Organizations (PSOs), along with providers, vendors, an expert advisory panel, and collaborating organizations to create a learning environment that mitigates risk and facilitates improvement.

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To learn more, visit the Partnership's [Implementation Approaches for Closing the Loop](#), or contact ECRI Institute by phone at (610) 825-6000 or by e-mail at hit@ecri.org.

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About ECRI Institute

ECRI Institute is an independent, nonprofit organization improving the safety, quality, and cost-effectiveness of care across all healthcare settings. The combination of evidence-based research, medical device testing, and knowledge of patient safety makes ECRI uniquely respected by healthcare leaders and agencies worldwide. For more than 50 years, ECRI Institute has had an unwavering dedication to transparency and strict conflict-of-interest policies. The organization has earned a reputation as the trusted voice of unbiased, research-based assurance for tens of thousands of members around the world using its solutions to minimize risk and improve patient care. ECRI Institute has the only medical device testing labs in North America and the Asia Pacific, where engineers conduct hands-on independent device testing for safety and human factors usability. ECRI Institute is designated an Evidence-based Practice Center by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. ECRI Institute PSO is listed as a federally certified Patient Safety Organization by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Visit www.ecri.org and follow [@ECRI_Institute](#) to learn more.