



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR RESPIRATORY CARE  
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May 20, 2005

USA Today  
Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Thank you for continuing to keep the issue of patient safety and health in the forefront. Your May 18 article, "Medical Errors Still Claiming Many Lives," calls attention to the problem of medical errors. You furthermore quote Lucian Leape about some simple solutions that would improve the situation – such as using a simple protocol for the care of ventilator patients.

The American Association for Respiratory Care and its member respiratory therapists have long espoused the use of protocols, such as the one Leape describes, as a means of improving care of patients – and also for reducing costs. A protocol for the care of a ventilator patient carried out by a qualified respiratory therapist would absolutely improve the rate of pneumonia in these patients.

Others believe so too. A paper by Dr. Marin Kollef in **Chest**, a journal of the American College of Chest Physicians, February 2000, shows that respiratory care services carried out by respiratory therapists working under protocols result in safe care that is in better compliance with institutional treatment algorithms.

An article by Dr. Deborah Cook (who is an expert in evidence-based medicine from McMaster University in Ontario) appeared in the September 2003 issue of **Respiratory Care** journal, the peer-reviewed science journal of the AACRC. That article states that randomized trials show that "weaning and discontinuation protocols implemented by respiratory therapists and nurses ought to be better developed and implemented, since this may be one of the best ways to rapidly and safely liberate patients from mechanical ventilation." Finally, the Institute for Health Care Improvement's 100K Lives Campaign says that respiratory therapists are critical in terms of improving the care of patients in the ICU.

Thank you for continuing to inform the public about health care issues so that they can become educated consumers of health care services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S.P. Giordano". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

S.P. Giordano, RRT  
AACRC Executive Director