

Patient Safety: the number one priority

What if patient safety is at stake? What do you do as a traveler to rectify the situation? Let's say you would like better treatment or their policies are inadequate for safe patient care. Many situations can happen in the workplace and they are often difficult to know how to handle them. Travelers also have the complication in that they don't work directly for the hospital so the procedure has to be handled appropriately to get the results you want.

If the situation is uncomfortable, but it isn't affecting your work or patient safety then you may want to save your time and energy for other things in your life than fighting with the culture you are temporarily immersed in. Just bide your time there and keep in mind that you are only there for 3 months (one of the many joys of traveling).

However, if you feel that patient safety is being jeopardized, you need to speak up. You don't want to be so distracted from your work that you make an error. In this type of situation the following steps are recommended:

1. Take time to analyze exactly what behaviors are bothering you in detail and document as many of them as you can and in great detail.
2. Ask your agency if they have a hospital liaison or who you should talk to about hospital issues?
3. Next, talk to them about a game plan on whom you plan on approaching such as the head nurse or director and what you plan on saying to resolve this situation. Make sure the agency feels involved and informed and supports your approaching this.
4. When presenting your issue to hospital personnel, make sure to remain objective and focus on patient safety. Don't say things like I feel that I am being picked on etc. Be more matter a fact. Talk about certain behaviors and how that is affecting your work and patient safety.
5. After presenting your issue, call your agency and give them a full report and then give it another week to see if it gets better.
6. If things don't get better, call your agency to see if they have any more recommendations or if they can take you out of this situation based on what is occurring in your situation.

It is much easier for an agency to be supportive of you if they feel well informed ahead of time. If they hear about your situation after the fact and they haven't been involved in the process, it is difficult for them to approach the facility or become involved.