

Johns Hopkins Opens New Center to Reduce Diagnostic Errors

Armstrong Institute Center for Diagnostic Excellence aims to save lives through better diagnoses

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A headache can be just a migraine, or it can be something more. It could be caused by a number of different health concerns: allergies, stress or possibly worse — a stroke. Headaches are just one of the many symptoms that often lead doctors to misdiagnose a medical issue. Research shows that diagnostic errors affect roughly one in 20 adults in the U.S., or 12 million Americans a year. As many as one-third of these errors may result in serious permanent injuries, including disability or death.

To address this issue, Johns Hopkins Medicine announced the opening of the [Armstrong Institute Center for Diagnostic Excellence](#). The center, which will be led by [David Newman-Toker, M.D., Ph.D.](#), Johns Hopkins associate professor of neurology and otolaryngology–head and neck surgery, and an internationally recognized leader in diagnostic research and diagnostic safety, will enhance diagnostic accuracy, cut waste on unnecessary diagnostic testing and move the needle on eliminating preventable harms from diagnostic errors worldwide. The center was made possible by a \$5 million gift from C. Michael Armstrong, who also provided funding for the [Johns Hopkins Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality](#) more than five years ago.

“Misdiagnosis is incredibly frequent because medicine is incredibly hard. There’s uncertainty, complexity and incomplete information all the time,” says Newman-Toker. “But we can do better than we’re doing right now, and our new center will lead change to make that a reality.”

The center’s mission is to innovate to achieve diagnostic excellence and accountability for Johns Hopkins, the region and the world by eliminating preventable harms from diagnostic errors, optimizing patient outcomes and experience in diagnosis, and reducing waste in diagnostic assessment. The center will include a multidisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, scientists and staff members from the Johns Hopkins Hospital and Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center campuses. The center’s first signature initiative will be to prevent stroke misdiagnosis in five adult emergency departments across the Johns Hopkins Health System. The goal is to reduce harms from missed stroke by 50 percent in five years.

“Medical misdiagnoses can happen to anyone at any time, including my father, who died from a medical mistake,” says Peter Pronovost, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality and senior vice president of patient safety and quality for Johns Hopkins Medicine. “With the new Armstrong Institute Center for Diagnostic Excellence, we envision a world where diagnoses are accurate, timely and effectively communicated to patients, avoiding both diagnostic error and overdiagnosis. Our patients deserve nothing less.”

[View a video on the center launch.](#)