

Johns Hopkins Establishes Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality

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Recognizing the urgent need to advance the science of reducing preventable harm and improve health care quality, Johns Hopkins Medicine is announcing the establishment of the Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality, an organization whose work will benefit not only Johns Hopkins patients but those around the world.

A \$10 million gift from C. Michael Armstrong, the chairman of the board of trustees of Johns Hopkins Medicine and retired chairman of Comcast, AT&T, Hughes Electronics and IBM World Trade Corporation, is funding the new institute.

“We are thankful for the leadership, vision, passion and generosity provided by Mike Armstrong to keep Johns Hopkins Medicine preeminent in research, education and patient care,” says Edward D. Miller, M.D., dean and CEO of Johns Hopkins Medicine. “Fewer things are more important in health care right now than improving patient safety and the quality of health care. All of us acknowledge these imperatives, but few of us have taken the steps to formally erect a framework that will tackle these issues head on. The Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality will allow us to use the best research methods and minds to develop the best practical tools, which we can share with our colleagues all over.”

“I believe that everything we do at Johns Hopkins Medicine — research, education, clinical practice, hospital care — is driven by our priority and focus on patients,” Armstrong says. “We have been making excellent progress on patient safety and quality, but we can do better. We must take our patient safety research and results to the next level, to be the best.”

The Armstrong Institute will oversee all of the current patient safety and quality efforts throughout Johns Hopkins Medicine. It is designed to rigorously apply scientific principles to the study of safety for the benefit of all patients, not just those at Hopkins. The focus will be on eliminating preventable harm for patients, eliminating health disparities, ensuring clinical excellence and creating a culture that values collaboration, accountability and organizational learning. Johns Hopkins will serve as a learning laboratory to test the best that its researchers have to offer in the fields of patient safety and quality improvement.

More than a decade ago, the Institute of Medicine published a landmark report, “To Err is Human,” in which it identified patient safety as a significant nationwide problem and stated that efforts to address this problem should focus on systems and not providers. Despite this, there is little evidence to suggest that safety has improved as a result of this report.

An Institute of Medicine report estimates that at least 44,000 and perhaps as many as 98,000 Americans die in hospitals every year due to medical errors. And so many more deaths are preventable with 100,000 patients dying from health care acquired infections annually, roughly 800,000 from diagnostic errors and thousands more due to communications and teamwork errors. All of this harm is avoidable.

“Donations like Mike Armstrong’s are vital, as patient safety research is significantly underfunded,” says Miller. “For every dollar the U.S. government spends on research, 98 cents is spent on finding new genes and new drugs, while only two pennies go to safety and quality initiatives.”

Armstrong has long been a great friend and benefactor to Johns Hopkins. The Anne and Mike Armstrong Medical Education Building, which could not have been built without a \$20 million gift from the Armstrongs, is the centerpiece of a revolutionary new medical school curriculum. The state-of-the-art facility opened in 2009.

Armstrong has also endowed a professorship in medicine. He chairs not only the Johns Hopkins Medicine board of trustees, but the boards of trustees of The Johns Hopkins Hospital and the Johns Hopkins Health System. He has served on the board of trustees of Johns Hopkins Medicine since its inception in 1996 and is a past chair of the Johns Hopkins Medicine board of visitors. He is also vice chair of The Johns Hopkins University board of trustees.

Johns Hopkins Medicine expects to name a director of the Armstrong Institute shortly.