



## **Celebrating World Patient Safety Day: Enhancing Healthcare by Empowering the Workforce**

Every year on September 17th, the world comes together to observe World Patient Safety Day. This significant day serves as a global reminder of the critical importance of ensuring the safety of patients in healthcare settings.

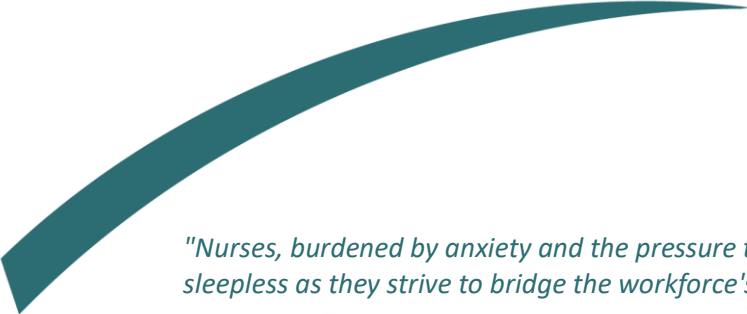
World Patient Safety Day is a day to reflect on the importance of patient safety and to celebrate the efforts of healthcare professionals who work tirelessly to ensure the well-being of their patients. In honour of this occasion, we had the privilege of speaking with Loraine Mahachi, Head of Clinical Services-Quality & Governance, with over two decades of experience, particularly in endoscopy services. Her journey in the healthcare field has been deeply intertwined with patient safety, making her insights invaluable.

### **A Background Rooted in Patient Safety**

For Loraine, patient safety has always been at the forefront of her responsibilities. Loraine's commitment to education and training has led her to collaborate with renowned teams and organisations in the healthcare field. She has been involved in initiatives such as the immersive training program at Royal Wolverhampton Trust, which focuses on accelerating training for newly appointed nurses. Loraine's work in this area aims to promote staff well-being, empower workforce, and enhance their ability to provide safe and compassionate care to patients.

### **Technology's Transformative Impact**

One of the remarkable transformations Loraine has witnessed during her career is the role of technology in endoscopy. She recalls the days of optical scopes and contrasted them with today's high-tech systems, such as the XI systems. These advancements have revolutionised endoscopy procedures, allowing for minimally invasive surgeries and same-day discharges.



*"Nurses, burdened by anxiety and the pressure to acquire new skills, find themselves sleepless as they strive to bridge the workforce's skills gap."*

While technology has undoubtedly improved patient outcomes, Loraine also acknowledges the challenge of ensuring that healthcare teams are proficient in using these innovations. Bridging the gap in training availability between medical and nursing staff is an ongoing concern. Medical professionals often have more opportunities to stay updated on the latest technologies, while nurses face constraints in allocating time for training. This challenge underscores the importance of investing in education and training for all healthcare professionals.

### **The Significance of Teamwork in Healthcare**

Loraine emphasised that healthcare professionals spend a significant portion of their lives at work, making workplace culture and relationships paramount. When team members trust each other and feel a sense of calm, it empowers them to communicate openly and honestly.

In healthcare, effective communication can be a matter of life and death. The ability to discuss near misses or potential risks without fear of judgment is crucial. Loraine emphasises a culture where healthcare teams are encouraged to speak up about anything that promotes and ensures patient safety. This open dialogue is essential for preventing medical errors and ensuring patient well-being.

*"Trust and collaboration are vital components of a successful healthcare team."*

### **Fostering a Culture of Teamwork**

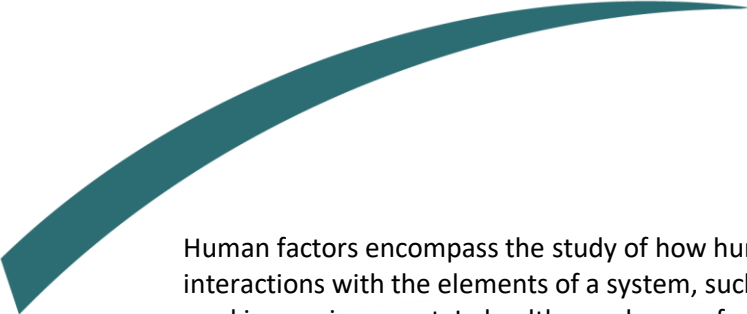
Loraine shares her approach to fostering teamwork and collaboration within her healthcare team. Morning huddles are a daily ritual, providing an opportunity for team members to check in, share experiences, and discuss any challenges they've encountered. These conversations create a sense of camaraderie and trust among team members.

To improve patient safety further, Loraine encourages the practice of shared governance. This involves giving team members the agency to propose and work on quality improvement initiatives. Team members sit down together to assess how they're performing against benchmarks, referencing how JAG has been crucial in this process and allowing them to identify areas for improvement collaboratively.

*"Efforts to assess our performance against benchmarks should be a collaborative, team-driven approach, not reliant on individual managers like - myself, with a focus on areas such as privacy and dignity, facilitated through open communication and shared platforms."*

### **Understanding Human Factors in Healthcare**

One of the central themes in the conversation is the concept of human factors in healthcare. But what exactly are human factors, and how do they relate to patient safety?



Human factors encompass the study of how human abilities and limitations influence interactions with the elements of a system, such as equipment, procedures, and the working environment. In healthcare, human factors examine how the cognitive abilities, emotions, stress levels, and teamwork of healthcare professionals impact patient care.

Loraine passionately emphasises the crucial role of human factors in healthcare. She highlights that the cognitive abilities and emotional well-being of healthcare professionals significantly affect patient outcomes. Stress, burnout, and a lack of collaboration can lead to poor patient experiences and even medical errors. This is particularly concerning in environments with a toxic culture, where healthcare workers are afraid to voice concerns due to fear of punitive measures.

The key to addressing human factors in healthcare and improving patient safety lies in promoting a culture where healthcare professionals feel empowered, supported, and trusted. Loraine emphasises the importance of trust, collaboration, and open communication in healthcare settings.

Creating a culture of trust involves providing healthcare workers with opportunities for self-understanding and well-being. It means recognising the impact of stress and burnout on professionals and taking steps to mitigate these issues, such as offering flexible working hours. When healthcare providers feel supported and empowered, they can deliver better care to their patients, exuding compassion, and energy that patients can readily detect.

### **Strategies for Healthcare Providers and Organizations**

Loraine shares various strategies to effectively address human factors and enhance patient safety, healthcare providers and organisations can adopt:

- Provide training that focuses on understanding the cognitive and emotional aspects of human factors, stress management, and teamwork.
- Encourage healthcare professionals to prioritise self-care and well-being, offering support for stress management and work-life balance.
- Implement policies that allow for flexible working hours to accommodate the needs of healthcare workers, reducing stress and burnout.
- Offer ongoing education and training to ensure that healthcare professionals are well-equipped to deliver safe and effective care.
- Develop leadership programs that promote self-awareness and effective leadership styles that contribute to a positive healthcare culture.
- Encourage teams to collaborate with other departments, fostering a sense of camaraderie and sharing best practice.
- Showcase successful initiatives and improvements at meetings and board presentations, creating a culture of recognition and transparency.

*"We are inherently social beings; we like to feel a sense of belonging and support. Employees should feel comfortable discussing their personal needs, like childcare arrangements, with their managers."*



*Even small adjustments, such as allowing a 30-minute change in shift times, can significantly impact an individual's well-being.*

*Patients notice the positive energy, leading to greater trust and better outcomes. Despite staffing challenges, we must acknowledge these issues and develop strategies, whether through quick fixes or long-term solutions, to support our dedicated healthcare professionals." - Lorraine Mahachi*

World Patient Safety Day reminds us that patient safety is everyone's responsibility. Understanding and addressing human factors in healthcare is essential for delivering safe and high-quality care. By promoting a culture of trust, empowerment, and collaboration, healthcare providers and organisations can make significant strides in enhancing patient safety and improving the overall healthcare experience for patients and professionals alike.