

# The Patient Safety Story: Lessons from two reporters in the trenches

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# Objectives

- The participant will be able to communicate the way poor quality of care in areas such as maternal health, medical mistakes and infection control can affect patients and their families.
- The participant will be able to utilize storytelling and work with media to bring awareness to patient safety issues and spur policymakers to address problems.

# Maternal health and safety

➤ The United States has the highest maternal death rate in the developed world.

➤ A USA TODAY investigation found:

**Hospitals know how to protect mothers. They just aren't doing it.** About half of maternal deaths and injuries could be prevented or reduced with better medical care. For years, experts have recommended that doctors, nurses and hospitals follow safety practices known to save lives.

But USA TODAY found that, at some hospitals, less than 15% of women experiencing childbirth emergencies quickly received recommended treatments.

# Maternal health (con't)

- ❖ Many states fail to track and study moms' deaths. USA TODAY further revealed that state maternal death review committees across the country often avoid scrutinizing medical care occurring in the days and hours before mothers' deaths - instead focusing on women's lifestyle choices or larger societal problems, like obesity, smoking and seatbelt use. Some states didn't study mothers' deaths at all.

# National attention for a lingering problem

**USA TODAY**  
09.20.18

**Autumn sounds sweet with these 13 new albums**  
Lil Wayne, Cheri, Tom Petty, Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper help bring music to our ears. **Full Music Preview in Life.**  
ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY VAUGHAN

**DEADLY DELIVERIES** A USA TODAY INVESTIGATION

## What states aren't doing to save new moms' lives

Many reviews haven't even scrutinized medical care provided

Leanne Ungar / USA TODAY

If you were going to try to stop mothers from dying in childbirth, you might try what most states in America have done: assign a panel of experts to review what's going wrong and offer ideas to fix it. But that hasn't worked. Death rates among pregnant women and new mothers have gotten worse, even as wealthy countries elsewhere improved. Today, the U.S. is the most dangerous place in the developed world to deliver a baby. Turns out, well-meaning states across the country have been doing it wrong. At least 30 states have avoided scrutinizing medical care provided to mothers who died or they haven't been studying deaths at all, a USA TODAY investigation has found. Instead, many state committees emphasized lifestyle choices and societal ills in their reports on maternal deaths. They weighed in on women smoking too much or getting too fat or on their failure to seek prenatal medical care. See **MOTHERS**, Page 4A.



Justine Butler, 27, with her son, Max, died after suffering a severe urinary infection while pregnant. Butler's family says she was in extreme pain and sought medical care but was initially sent home without seeing a doctor. FAMILY PHOTO

« Advocate for yourself  
Get our guide with questions to ask about safety practices at [pregnancyfaq.usatoday.com](http://pregnancyfaq.usatoday.com)

**NEWSLINE**

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**Free agent Harper, Nats at a crossroads**  
Via success, playoff disappointment, star and team have grown up together



President Trump stands behind his nominee. MICHAEL REYNOLDS/GETTY IMAGES

## Trump's history clouds

**California considers gender quotas**  
Bill would require female executives in businesses

Jorge L. Ortiz  
USA TODAY

As California Gov. Jerry Brown ponders whether to sign a landmark bill that would make the state the first in the nation to require more women in boardrooms, he will weigh reams of evidence that point to the benefits of such inclusion. Brown will have to consider the criticisms and opposition associated with

# Stories spur action

## Senate passes a 'landmark' bill that aims to reduce maternal deaths

LAURA UNGAR | LOUISVILLE COURIER JOURNAL | 6:29 am EST December 14, 2018



# “I am one of the 50,000”

❖ Videos can help tell the story of patient harm in a very powerful way.

<https://www.usatoday.com/deadly-deliveries/videos/>

# Ways to connect with the media

- Look for reporters who are already writing about an issue you care about.
- Contact information for the reporter is usually included beneath a story. Reach out.
- Reach out to reporters through social media, particularly through Twitter.
- Help reporters find and tell the stories of real people affected by the patient safety issue. The most impactful stories, by far, are those that include patients willing to share their experiences publically.

# (More) ways to connect with media

- Be a source on other stories to develop relationship with reporter. (Get good at ‘sound bites’)
- Alert reporters to new developments, such as regulations or transparency issues.
- Be ready to tell your story concisely, on short notice.
- Don’t call. Email is almost always best. Send occasional follow up email the next day.
- Direct pitches directly to individuals, not mass emails.

# One Patient's Story Can Be Example Of Many

The image is a screenshot of a web browser displaying a news article on the USA Today website. The browser's address bar shows the URL: [usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/06/19/feds-oppose-public-reporting-hospital-infections/710682002/](https://usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/06/19/feds-oppose-public-reporting-hospital-infections/710682002/). The page features a blue header with the USA Today logo and navigation links for NEWS, SPORTS, ENTERTAINMENT, LIFE, MONEY, TECH, TRAVEL, and OPINION. A search bar and a 'Subscribe' button are also visible. The main article title is 'Trump administration rule could stop public reporting of hospital infections despite death toll'. The author is Jayne O'Donnell, and the article was published on June 19, 2018, at 4:29 p.m. ET, with an update on June 20, 2018, at 11:30 a.m. ET. The article includes a photo of Sean Dougherty, USA TODAY, and social media sharing options for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Comment, Email, and More. The text of the article discusses a proposed rule by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to halt the public disclosure of MRSA, post-operative sepsis, and surgical site infections. An advertisement for Johnston & Murphy is displayed on the right side of the article, featuring the text: 'No matter how you work, Johnston & Murphy has a formula for success.' and a 'SHOP NOW' button. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows various application icons and the system clock indicating 12:31 PM on 10/13/2019.

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## Trump administration rule could stop public reporting of hospital infections despite death toll

Jayne O'Donnell, USA TODAY Published 4:29 p.m. ET June 19, 2018 | Updated 11:30 a.m. ET June 20, 2018

 (Photo: Sean Dougherty, USA TODAY)

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Federal health regulators will have to stop releasing data on hospital infections — which affect one in 25 hospital patients every day — under a proposal set to take effect in November, according to an analysis by patient safety advocates.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) plan, part of a [complex 500-page proposed rule](#), could halt the public disclosure of the "super bug" MRSA, post-operative sepsis and surgical site infections, as well as accidents and injuries ranging from bedsores to respiratory failure after surgery.

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12:31 PM 10/13/2019

# One Patient's Story Can Be Example Of Many

- Think of all the problems your case illustrates as that increases potential for exposure
- Hand washing, hospital ratings, infections, disruptive doctors, confidential settlements and so on.
- New developments represent new chance to weigh in about it

# Developing a Reporter Relationship

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying a news article on the USA Today website. The browser's address bar shows the URL: [usatoday.com/story/news/health/2018/12/21/alleged-abuse-victims-state-medical-boards-slow-act-against-doctors/2380090002/](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2018/12/21/alleged-abuse-victims-state-medical-boards-slow-act-against-doctors/2380090002/). The browser's address bar also shows several open tabs and a search bar.

The article's main headline is: **Alleged victims of sexual assault by doctors push for 'real change' by state medical boards**. The byline reads: **Jayne O'Donnell, USA TODAY**. The publication date is **Published 2:15 p.m. ET Dec. 21, 2018 | Updated 2:36 p.m. ET Dec. 21, 2018**.

The article features a video player on the left side, showing a woman speaking. To the right of the video player is a large image of a modern bedroom with a large window overlooking the ocean. Below the main image is a smaller image of a beach scene. The USA Today logo is visible in the top right corner of the video player.

The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows the Windows Start button, a search bar, and several open applications including Microsoft Office Word, Google Chrome, and Microsoft PowerPoint. The system tray on the right shows the time as 12:30 and the date as 10/11.

# Developing a Reporter Relationship

- Few reporters can follow developments like victims can
- Even shrinking newsrooms means your tips more important than ever
- Be a rolodex for reporters looking for other sources.

# Let's talk about your stories

- ❖ And how to get them into *our* stories and others'...