

Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority Reports a Rise in Infant Injuries and Deaths in PA Hospitals

Article By:

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A [recent article](#) has brought to light the concerns of the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority (PSA), which stated that it received reports of 169 “serious events” involving neonatal care in 2022, which is twice as many as occurred in 2018.

Of the 169 events, at least 15 involved babies who died, according to Regina Hoffman, the executive director of the PSA.

Unfortunately, the agency has been unable to gather information from hospitals to analyze the incidents and take steps to prevent them, which is ringing alarm bells for new and expecting parents.

Why are PA hospitals refusing to provide this information?

This issue illustrates challenges in regulatory and statutory guidance. Patients and patient safety groups understandably want answers so that they can make informed decisions about their healthcare, but hospitals have not been forthcoming about the data on serious events involving newborns.

Pennsylvania law requires hospitals to file reports about such outcomes to regulatory authorities. These reports are allowed to be confidential, providing protection against litigation or disciplinary actions. Additional legal requirements at federal and state levels also require hospitals to analyze “mistakes and unexpected outcomes” with the goal of improving safety measures—but they must follow regulatory guidelines to receive legal protection.

However, according to the Hospital and Health Systems Association of Pennsylvania, disclosing data to the patient safety authority could jeopardize these protections.

What this means for new and expecting parents

With the PSA unable to analyze critical information that could inform its efforts to prevent infant injuries and deaths, it’s essential that concerned parents do everything possible to evaluate the safety of any hospital they’re considering.

When making a decision about your neonatal care provider, follow these steps to ensure you're in a safe environment for your child:

Research the hospital

Gather information about the reputation and track record of the hospital you're planning to go to. You can do this with online resources like hospital rating websites, which often provide information about any safety concerns or problematic events.

Review hospital policies

You can and should inquire about your hospital's policies and protocols on newborn care and safety and ask questions about staff training, infection control measures, and specialized neonatal care units.

Talk to your healthcare providers

You can get a sense of a hospital's commitment to patient safety by engaging in conversations with hospital staff, such as doctors and nurses. You can also use these conversations to inquire about the hospital's approach to preventing medical mistakes and how they deal with issues that may arise during childbirth.

Visit the facility

If possible, visit the facility before your delivery to get a sense of the environment and the facilities that are available so that you can assess the overall atmosphere and the cleanliness of the hospital.

Find a recommended hospital

Talk with friends or family who have given birth in hospitals in your area and ask them about their experiences there. Consider looking to online forums, social media groups, and in-person events or social occasions. Seeking out the advice of people you know and trust can provide more insight and peace of mind than reading about it online.

Concerned there may have been safety and healthcare violations at your hospital?

If you're concerned that there may have been safety and healthcare violations at your hospital, follow these steps to help you move forward:

- Write down any incidents or things you noticed. Include names of staff, dates, and any details that can support your claim.
- File a complaint with the Pennsylvania Department of Health and provide them with the information you have gathered and any evidence you have.
- Consult with a [medical malpractice attorney](#) if you feel that any safety violations you may have experienced meet the level of medical malpractice. An experienced attorney can assess the merits of your case and guide you through the legal process.

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National Law Review, Volumess XIII, Number 172

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