
Abstract
In 1999, patient safety moved to the forefront of health care based upon astonishing statistics and a landmark report released by the Institute of Medicine (IOM). This report, To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System, caught the attention of the media, and there were headlines across the nation about the safety (or lack of safety) for patients in healthcare organizations. In the ensuing years, there have been many efforts to reduce medical errors. Clinicians reviewed their practices, researchers looked for better ways of doing things, and safety and quality organizations focused attention on the topic of patient safety. Initiatives and guidelines were established to define, measure, and improve patient safety practices and culture. Nurses remain central to providing an environment and culture of safety, and as a result, nurses are emerging as safety leaders in the healthcare setting. This article discusses the history of the patient safety movement in the United States and describes the concepts of patient safety and patient safety culture as the foundations for excellent health care delivery.