



MANITOBA INSTITUTE
FOR PATIENT SAFETY

Make It Personal: Interview Series

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An Interview with Dr. John Wade

Dr. John Wade's innovative approach to patient safety has saved hundreds, if not thousands of patients, both those undergoing surgery requiring anesthesia, and those using a transforming health system in Canada. To understand his impact on patient safety, it is important to know his humble beginnings, starting his healthcare career as a rural family physician in Taber, Alberta before going for additional training at the University of California in San Francisco to become an anesthesiologist. After completing this training, he returned to Manitoba to practice as an anesthesiologist.



Dr. Wade has also had a strong presence in the education communities shaping our future healthcare providers. He was the Department of Anesthesia Chair, as well as the Dean of the Max Rady College of Medicine at the University of Manitoba (now Dean Emeritus). He is also Professor Emeritus, Department of Anesthesia and Perioperative Medicine. Dr. Wade currently serves on the St. Boniface Hospital Research Advisory Committee, and is the chair of the Transitional Council for Self-Regulation of Paramedics in Manitoba.

Need for Standards of Practice Guidelines

Dr. Wade's interest in patient safety began early in his career, when he was practicing as an anesthesiologist in the 1970's. With his colleagues, an outcome study was initiated to look at the safety of anesthesia. As a result of the study, practice guidelines were developed in Winnipeg and helped to develop practice guidelines for the Canadian Anesthesia Society. These Guidelines for Practice are used by Anesthesiologists across Canada and annual updates have been published since their inception.

Improving Patient Safety at a Local and National Level

Following the 1999 publication by the U.S. Institute of Medicine, "To Err Is Human" the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada was concerned about patient safety. Dr. Wade became involved by chairing the National Steering Committee on Patient Safety, an



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interdisciplinary committee. The group published “Building a Safer System” in 2002. As a result of this report, in 2003, the Canadian Patient Safety Institute was created, with Dr. Wade as the founding board chair.

Subsequently, Dr. Wade played a critical role in the establishment of the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety (MIPS) in 2004. Of note, in Dr. Wade’s honour, MIPS established an award in his name in 2005, to recognize local excellence in the important work of patient safety. Over the years Dr. Wade has continued to spread his knowledge of patient safety through countless meetings with doctors, nurses and provincial governments.

Patient safety: “Better outcomes for patients”

When asked what patient safety means to him, Dr. Wade defines patient safety as, “better outcomes for patients,” and reminds us that the psychological aspect of patient safety is “just as important” as the physiological aspect of patient safety.

As a patient who has had surgery himself, Dr. Wade, is “impressed with the system the way that it is today.” He was especially impressed with the time-out checklists that are used before, during, and after surgery by the entire surgical team.

Recommendations for the Future

Dr. Wade shared his perspective of what patient safety needs to focus on next, which is widening the focus of where adverse events take place. Dr. Wade stated that the original patient adverse event data was about patients who were hospitalized, however, a “larger portion of healthcare is provided outside of a hospital, with approximately 50% of surgeries being done outside of hospitals now at centers such as the Pan Am Clinic.” This creates challenges in assessing the data.

He also emphasized that “we (doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, and pharmacists) all work together as teams, and when we cut down on the hierarchy, we make healthcare safer.” Dr. Wade recommends making rounds as an interdisciplinary team, providing a team approach to patient care.

What Makes for Safer Care

Dr. Wade, who once served as the Deputy Minister of Health in Manitoba, believes that “patient safety is the responsibility of those providing care as well as those receiving care.” Dr. Wade encouraged providers “we are making a difference,” and an example of this is how virtual care is now happening due to Covid-19 precautions for in-person clinic visits. He hopes that we will see more of that in the future, especially in rural areas.

Dr. Wade was appointed to the Order of Canada in 2019 as a Member, acknowledging his advocacy for patient safety and quality improvement in healthcare. As a champion of advocacy, he advises patient involvement as well, and encourages that “you bring someone with you to help ask questions”, someone who can advocate for you when you might need help.

Starting Young

Currently Dr. Wade serves on the Board of the Pan Am Clinic Foundation and the Boys & Girls Club of Winnipeg because of his interest in preventative health measures. The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy recently conducted a grant-funded research project that looked at the benefits of children participating in the Girls and Boys Club of Winnipeg’s lunch and after school activities. The data found that children who participate in this program have better health outcomes, better educational achievement, and have less contact with the justice system. As a board director of the Girls and Boys Club of Winnipeg, after seeing the results of the study, Dr. Wade feels that more resources are needed to put into supports for the early years to prevent problems occurring in later years.

The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety (MIPS) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation established in 2004 to promote and coordinate activities that improve patient safety and enhance quality healthcare in Manitoba.

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