

**Changes need to be made in healthcare practice to make hospitals a safer place**

The multiple stories of parents of young children who died on a controversial cardiac ward are a stark reality that more needs to be done to bring about significant changes in healthcare practice and provide better care.

Eleven children from England and Wales died following heart surgery between 2010 and 2014 at the Bristol Royal Hospital for Children and everyone is hoping that major changes will come about from the review, which will make the hospital a much safer place.

The review which was published this Thursday says the ward for children recovering from heart surgery was under strain. It said young heart patients who were treated at the hospital were “put at risk of harm” because of staff shortages and a lack of skills.

Parents claimed children in need of close monitoring were left for up to three hours, without even oxygen levels being checked.

“Changes need to be made in healthcare practice to avoid this happening again”

One mother told the review team that she was promised her child would be seen every 15-30 minutes following an operation. But after her child was moved to ward 32, he was not checked for more than three hours.

One outreach nurse reported the pressure they were under. “From the start of the shift it was very difficult to provide a safe and satisfactory standard of care. Not all patients who required hourly observations had these carried out and some of the basic care needs were not met, such as the changing of a patient’s nappy when this was waiting to be done,” the nurse said.

Whilst preventing overcrowding at hospitals like Bristol Royal Hospital for Children requires long term structural changes, more can be done to in the short term to ensure safe and effective high quality care is delivered.

Technology solutions are now readily available in both hospital and healthcare community settings to improve inefficiencies, reduce adverse events and save lives.

Isansys Lifecare in Oxfordshire is already working with doctors and nurses at the Birmingham Children’s Hospital where its wireless system is monitoring children on the cardiac ward to provide early warnings of patient deterioration faster than clinicians would be able to otherwise.

The company has designed and developed the Patient Status Engine, a patient monitoring platform which can monitor both paediatric and adult patients continuously, alleviate the pressures of nursing staff and ensure patients receive the care and attention at the right time, and from the right member of staff.

The platform uses wireless smart ‘patch’ technology to collect data directly from the patient. The system analyses the patient’s vital signs and will alert doctors and nurses if a person’s health is deteriorating. The system allows medical teams to intervene as soon as problems develop, improving the outcome of treatment for the patient and helping to avert 6,000 deaths each year.

Rebecca Weir, cofounder of Isansys, says: “I am deeply saddened and moved by the experiences of the families in Bristol and my heart goes out to them all. As a parent myself, I cannot even begin to imagine what they are going through on a daily basis.

“There’s no reason in this day and age that patients should be receiving anything other than the best care when they go into a hospital. Careful and continuous monitoring is critical in this environment, and, as a parent, you would want to ensure your child was getting the best level of care, whilst also feeling comfortable in their surroundings. This is even more crucial when it comes to the monitoring of children.

“Without effective monitoring, early warning signs, which could have been detected and acted upon are often missed, as is the case here.

“Enough’s enough. We need to get innovation into hospitals now, which will help stop situations like this happening. My regret is that, for those children and their families, these technologies weren’t available sooner and deployed at Bristol, but now more can done to ensure other families don’t have to suffer in this way in the future.”

To find out more about the work of Isansys at Birmingham Children’s Hospital, please click [here](http://www.isansys.com/content2012/display_news.php?id=49).

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