

## Letters to the business editor

Saturday, December 17, 2011

Focus on error prevention

While I applaud the ingenuity of the University of Pittsburgh Law School profiled in the Dec. 5, 2011, "[Pitt Mock Trial Pits Those Studying Law Against Those Studying Medicine](#)," more value could be found in preventing medical errors in the first place.

For 12 years now, the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative has been teaching graduate students in the health professions to deliver high-quality care more safely. We apply basic Lean management principles to prevent errors and produce highly reliable care. For instance, these Lean principles have been used to eliminate health-care associated infections, falls in long-term-care facilities and wrong-site surgeries. We do this because most basic systems-engineering principles, taught to nearly every undergraduate business major, are left out of the curriculum and residencies for health care.

More and more students in graduate health-care professional programs, recognizing a changing policy and practice environment, want instruction on how to improve the system. Since 2001, the Jewish Healthcare Foundation has hosted two seminar programs on system reform and patient safety for graduate students. This year, nearly three applicants applied for each available spot. These students are seeking supplementary education for which there is no stipend and no academic credit.

So, my vote is for more classroom instruction and residency practice in quality improvement and safety than in defending malpractice suits.

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