



August 2008

I appreciate the opportunity to address the recent *Boston Globe* article on wrong site surgery. While the article was accurate (there have been 4 wrong site spine cases at New England Baptist Hospital in the past two years), there are a number of important key facts that the article did not mention that I would like to share with you.

What the article does not say is that New England Baptist Hospital has a zero tolerance policy for errors and we are hyper vigilant when it comes to self reporting any abnormalities in our processes. In three of the four cases mentioned in the article, many experts felt that it was "not necessary" to disclose this information to the Department of Public Health. We disagree! Each case represents an opportunity to educate ourselves and others and to improve processes for all patients. As an Orthopedic Center of Excellence, we owe it to our patients to do whatever it takes to ensure their safety. We believe part of that process is involving the experts at the Department of Public Health and the Joint Commission. If that means more media scrutiny, so be it. We are confident that we are doing right by our patients in reporting what other hospitals would not.

As the article states, after the *Boston Globe* began inquiring, state health authorities informed us that they would require an independent assessment to review our response to the cases. Prior to that, the Department of Public Health had investigated each incident and found in every instance, the surgeries were performed in accordance with nationally established standards set by the Joint Commission and others. In fact, our policy for site verification goes beyond national standards to ensure patient safety. That aside, we share DPH's goal to "drive the rate of these events to zero", so we welcome the opportunity to work with an independent consultant to affirm and augment the excellent work already done by our task force.

Finally, New England Baptist Hospital does more complex spine surgery cases than any other hospital in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In the time period mentioned in the article, we did approximately 4,000 spine cases without incident. These four cases, while all regrettable, represent 0.1% of spine surgeries performed at New England Baptist Hospital.

I hope this information sheds further light on the subject. Should you have any questions or concerns about surgical site verification at New England Baptist Hospital, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Diane Gulczynski, RN, MS, CNOR  
Senior Vice President, Clinical Operations & Chief Nursing Officer