



The Truth about Hennepin Healthcare's Research

Perspectives on the News

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You may have read allegations about Hennepin Healthcare's research practices recently. In fact, since June 2018, when news outlets began reporting on the life-saving work of Emergency Medical Services (EMS), some people have been under the impression that our organization misled federal agencies and violated rules and regulations regarding informed consent.

We want you to know the truth.

Truth #1: We Made Mistakes

We have been working to identify what happened and what changes are necessary so that people don't misunderstand the studies we are conducting, how we are conducting them, and why we are doing studies in the first place. While we followed the federal regulations as we understood them, we clearly failed to fully inform the community in advance of doing these studies. We apologize – we should have publicized this research and asked for feedback from the community.

Truth # 2: Ketamine Saves Lives

Despite what you may have heard, the drug ketamine saves lives. It is used to help individuals deal with extreme agitation, caused by drug abuse or psychological trauma that could lead to death. Ketamine is only used when there is a true medical need for sedation, and it is a long-established standard of care in pre-hospital and hospital situations. Going forward, we want the community to know that we follow best practices about when and how to deploy ketamine, ensuring that we put the safety and welfare of patients first.

Truth #3: We're Changing Our Processes

What we could have done better, and will do in the future, is explain the nature of our studies so that people in our community have a better understanding of what we're studying and how we're studying it. In the sedation studies, for example, we were timing the onset of the sedation that a patient was already receiving due to their medical condition and comparing it to two other drugs. Our goal is always to safely administer the most effective drugs to those who need them.

Why would Hennepin Healthcare do this kind of study? So that our patients and families can have better outcomes with fewer side effects. We are one of the nation's foremost public teaching hospitals, and part of our public commitment is to conduct research that will benefit people, particularly those who may have been historically excluded from these studies in the past.

Truth #4: We Understand Systemic Racism

Systemic racism is a significant barrier to health in people of color. As a healthcare system, we are dedicated to ending racism. In fact, we've begun training our employees on Historical Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care to ensure that we put into practice what we already understand all too well: that racism impedes health equity in our state. Our goal is to become the first trauma-informed health system in the nation, which we cannot do without the support of the communities we serve.

Truth #5: We're Aligning Ourselves with Community

In the past year, we've established two community advisory boards that will help us better align with the needs of our community. Board members have told us, frankly, that we can and must do better. They have made it clear that despite our 130-year history in Minneapolis, we have failed to communicate effectively with those who have been marginalized by substandard healthcare practices. This was never our intent, and we don't want it to happen again. We own this problem and we are actively mending this breach and improving relationships.

Nothing is more important to us than the trust between Hennepin Healthcare and the community. So, in the future, we are going to tell you much more about our work and why it matters to every individual in Hennepin County. We're going to give you an inside look at who is on our advisory boards, and what these Boards are doing. We are also committed to sharing additional information about how your individual voice can be heard around research and patient care.

Next Time: Why Should You Care About Hennepin Healthcare?