Background
In the health care industry, silo thinking often prevents organizations from freely communicating with one another about common safety events. To address these concerns, the Vizient™ Patient Safety Organization (PSO) was created to allow organizations to collaborate with peers, share and implement best practices, and measure results. The PSO also offers federal privilege and confidentiality protection for voluntary patient safety activities, encouraging clinicians and organizations to share information without the fear of disclosure (see Figure 1).

Project aim
To create and implement an effective structure for organizations to share patient safety topics, events and solutions in a safe and confidential environment, ultimately improving patient safety throughout the organizations.

Strategy for change
In April 2017, the Vizient PSO launched a pilot safety huddle to test the practicality and effectiveness of the new model. The pilot team — consisting of safety representatives from five general acute care hospitals decided on a bi-monthly conference call format lasting 30 minutes, allowing time for substantive discussion without being restrictive on busy schedules.

During the first safety huddle and review of the PSO database, the Vizient PSO members determined that all hospital provider organizations had the same improvement opportunities regardless of the number of beds (Figure 2). It was quickly evident that the collaboration on patient safety issues from a Vizient PSO safety huddle would benefit all members. The safety huddle provides a unique platform for all acute care hospital types, critical access hospitals, general acute care and academic medical centers to learn from one another.

At the beginning of each call, the Vizient PSO leaders educated members about what data could and could not be shared across PSO members. Each member agreed to abide by the confidentiality and disclosure agreement prior to attending the huddle.

Changes made
During the pilot safety huddles, the team determined the optimal agenda for each 30-minute huddle period, including:
• Ground rules for confidentiality and information sharing
• Roll call, where each member has the opportunity to share high-level safety concerns
• Follow-up, where members send leading practices (not patient safety work product) to the PSO collaborative advisor for distribution to each participant

Outcomes
In June 2017, two months after the pilot launched, Vizient invited all PSO members to attend the bi-monthly safety huddles. Since then, a dozen organizations are consistently joining the discussions, including academic medical centers, community hospitals and critical access hospitals. This diversity of organization types fosters excellent collaboration and learning. The huddles are regularly completed in 30 minutes and members freely share patient safety concerns and challenges.

Safety huddle topics range from IT privacy to suicide

In a survey, participants reported that the safety huddles increase their ability to problem-solve issues, offer new knowledge to raise awareness of patient safety events, and allow them to successfully share information with other PSO members (see Figure 3).

Next steps
Now that the Vizient PSO safety huddles are firmly established, the team will work to increase the number of engaged organizations while continuing to modify the model and further meet the needs of participants. In addition, membership discussion during the PSO safety huddles will prioritize focus areas for 2018.

In summary, the safety huddles are proving to be an effective new vehicle for clinicians to share safety information in a confidential environment for the benefit of both hospitals and patients.

Feedback from Vizient PSO safety huddle participants
"I was able to complete a gap analysis from the policies shared after the huddle and improve current practices at my organization." "I find the huddles very helpful, especially knowing that other organizations share the same struggles."