

## Speaker Prof Kim Oates AO

**"Why errors in healthcare occur and your role in making your own healthcare safer" 7th Dec 2022**

Prof Kim Oates AO treated us to a very interesting, topical, amusing and thought-provoking presentation on factors that lead to healthcare errors, and on ways a patient can lessen the risks involved.

He drew on his extensive practical experience and research in paediatrics, public health and medical administration, including as Chief Executive of the Children's Hospital at Westmead. During his career, he developed a passion for patient safety and now teaches on this subject nationally and internationally about how doctors can work more safely to reduce patient harm.

He noted that 8% of hospital admissions in Australia are associated with a reported adverse event that could have been prevented, causing 18,000 unnecessary deaths per year.

He highlighted distinctive features that increase risk, as well as some key factors that compromise patient safety, such as fatigue, distractions, interruptions, poor supervision, not checking, poor teamwork, communication, lack of knowledge, standards noncompliance, equipment variations, and over-reliance on technology. He also stressed the importance of the doctor engaging with and listening carefully to the patient, as well as with all levels of the health team. He provided several examples of these problems.

He also noted a blame culture can suppress reporting and hence corrective action. Usually there are several factors that contribute to errors, so blaming a single person may miss other underlying factors that need attention.

One factor often overlooked is complacency. Don't accept the status quo. It is important for all concerned to regularly ask: why is it done this way? Is there a better way?

As a patient, he urged us to ask when relevant:

- What is this condition (or test) called?
- What are my options?
- What are the risks or side effects of a procedure or medication?
- Is the procedure/test needed? How effective is it?
- When/ how will I get the results?
- What will it cost?
- Can I have another opinion?
- What will happen if nothing is done now?
- For surgery, how many times have you (the surgeon) done this operation and what are your results?
- What caused it? etc

In his vote of thanks, John Thom expressed deep appreciation for such practical sound advice which could be life-saving as we navigate our medical futures.

A copy of his presentation containing much more detail is posted on our website.

Peter James