

South Carolina Chosen as Pilot for National Effort to Improve Surgical Safety.

At the TAP Conference in Hilton Head, we unveiled a new patient safety program that can potentially save hundreds of patient lives each year and reduce the number of major surgical complications by as much as 30 percent. South Carolina is partnering with renowned surgeon and author Atul Gawande to adopt a Surgical Safety Checklist in every operating room in the state.

Dr. Gawande currently serves as the lead of the World Health Organization's Safe Surgery Saves Lives Initiative, an initiative built around a three-part surgical checklist that has been demonstrated to reduce surgical complications by more than one-third. Most recently, Dr. Gawande documented his experience creating and testing the WHO Surgical Safety Checklist in his New York Times Bestseller, "The Checklist Manifesto." He was unable to attend the TAP Conference in person, but he delivered the following invitation to partner with South Carolina's hospitals by video.

"We selected South Carolina to be the first state to partner with us to help improve surgical safety around the entire country," said Gawande. "South Carolina has a tremendous history of successfully introducing other quality initiatives such as improving the care of heart attack patients and reducing infection. South Carolina hospitals have already demonstrated their commitment to improving surgical safety by initially testing the World Health Organization's Surgical Safety Checklist in more than 80 percent of the state's hospitals, many of which have since adopted the checklist as a routine component of surgical care. We would like to collaborate with South Carolina hospitals in developing a model to improve surgical safety at a state level that other U.S. states can follow."

South Carolina was recently ranked by the federal government as one of five states making the greatest improvements in the quality and safety of health care. The safe surgery partnership with Dr. Gawande is exciting because it is strong proof that our state hospital community is leading the nation in important areas. The enthusiasm expressed by participants at the TAP Conference was gratifying, especially in light of the number of surgeons who asked if they could be involved as leaders of the state campaign. According to my count, every hospital present at TAP indicated their intent to present the Gawande initiative to their medical staff and hospital leadership. We hope those of you unable to attend last week's conference will do likewise. For more information or to get involved with the campaign, please contact Dr. Rick Foster at rfoster@scha.org.