

**TO:** Hospitals and Ambulatory Surgery Centers  
Administrators, Presidents, CEOs

**FROM:** Mark R. Chassin, MD, FACP, MPP, MPH  
The Joint Commission

Linda K. Groah, RN, CNOR, NEA-BC, FAAN  
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN)

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**RE:** National Time Out Day

*“There’s been a wrong-site surgery...”*

There are few more devastating statements in health care. For patients and their loved ones, a wrong-site, wrong-side, or wrong-surgical procedure is life-changing while, for health care administrators and their entire staff, a sentinel event of any kind is profoundly demoralizing to the spirit as well as damaging to reputation.

An effective and well-executed time out is an important part of what should be a multi-layered defense against wrong-site surgery. We know that a time out without full participation by all key people in the operating room increases the risk of wrong-site surgery, but tackling other contributing factors that increase the risk for wrong-site surgery is equally important. These contributing factors vary by organization and by event and may occur at every stage of the surgical process, starting with the scheduling of the procedure. It is imperative to understand the specific contributing factors that increase risk in each organization so that appropriate solutions can be targeted to reduce the specific risks in the organization’s processes.

Wednesday, June 13, is National Time Out Day. The Joint Commission and the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) encourage you to remind all surgical team members of the need to conduct a time out for every patient, every time. As administrators, you can take advantage of National Time Out Day to understand your vulnerabilities and prioritize your perioperative process improvement activities. This is an opportunity to assemble your leadership to closely evaluate and reassess your culture of safety – and consider whether everyone on the perioperative team feels entirely free and obligated to speak up if they think anything is wrong.

Initiated as an annual awareness campaign by AORN in 2004 and supported by The Joint Commission, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Council on Surgical & Perioperative Safety (CSPS), National Time Out Day is a powerful tool that supports surgical nurses’ ability to speak up for safe practices in the operating room. It is also a tool for hospital administrators to reduce common risks for wrong-site surgery.

Don’t overlook this opportunity to focus on the prevention of wrong-site surgery at your facility. Commit to an effective and well-executed time out for every patient, every time.

Sincerely,

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President  
The Joint Commission

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#### **Resources to prevent wrong-site surgery**

- [Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare Targeted Solutions Tool™ for Wrong Site Surgery](#)
- [AORN Comprehensive Surgical Checklist](#)
- [Universal Protocol for Preventing Wrong Site, Wrong Procedure and Wrong Person Surgery™](#)