



Submitted photo

The Ocean Beach (Wash.) Hospital Surgery Team. Front row, from left, Amy Malmstadt, Ericka Hazen, Mary Thorsen, Vee Holman, Dr. David Friedman. Back row, from left, Dr. Jessop McDonnell, Theresa Leinweber and Mark Matthews.

Ilwaco hospital surgical team helps pioneer 'checklist' protocol

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ILWACO, Wash. — Research has shown that a 19-point aviation-style "checklist" that has been adapted for the operating room reduces the risk of death and complications by more than 30 percent, according to an article published in a recent edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Doctors at Ocean Beach Hospital are among the first in Washington and the nation to implement this new surgical protocol, said Dr. David Friedman, a general surgeon at the hospital.

Patterned after the decades-old aviation pre-flight checklist, the low-tech, low-cost innovation is designed to free surgical teams to focus on the complex tasks while relegating the simple or rote to what essentially amounts to a cheat sheet.

The Surgical Care Outcomes Assessment

Program (SCOAP) is a statewide physician-led quality assurance campaign that pilot-tested their version of the checklist in 15 hospitals before rolling it out Jan. 15. The goal is to have every operating room in Washington using the surgical checklist by year's end.

As a pilot hospital, Ocean Beach is required to incorporate the checklist into every procedure, according to Friedman. The checklist is used at the start of a surgery to cover the basics of the procedure about to take place and who's responsible for what.

After the surgery, with the patient still in the room, the surgical team revisits the check-

list as part of a debriefing. They confirm all items on the checklist have been covered, all instruments and supply counts are correct and that any specimens are accurately labeled.

"Coming from a Washington state perspective, the data we provide is becoming a template for the rest of the state, and even the rest of the world," said Friedman. "What's relevant in a big hospital in a big city is also relevant for a rural surgeon in a small community."

Currently, there are 42 hospitals enrolled or committed to enrolling in SCOAP, according to Rosa Johnson, the SCOAP program director in Seattle. Ocean Beach is one of the first hospitals to be involved, and is already providing information being used throughout the state, she said.

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— Dr. David Friedman
Ilwaco-based surgeon