To improve the safety and delivery of care, St. Clair Hospital uses a wide variety of Eclipsys Sunrise Enterprise™ solutions, including the company’s acute care, emergency care, ambulatory care, charting and performance management solutions, as well as utilizing the company’s revenue cycle solutions and outsourcing and remote hosting services.
The introduction of the heparin infusion protocols coincided with the roll out of CPOE in the ED. One type of error occurred when ED physicians inadvertently selected a maintenance heparin protocol in the EHR instead of an initial dosing protocol when initiating heparin therapy. To mitigate this problem, the system alerts the user when a maintenance protocol is ordered without a prior order for the initial dosing protocol, thus preventing inadvertent selection by the physician or other health care provider.

Physician outreach, along with numerous software programming changes to reduce errors and improve CPOE workflow, promoted physician confidence and efficiency. The result of this endeavor was improved patient safety. There have been zero heparin infusion occurrences in the ED over the last 12 months.

**Widespread Nursing Acceptance**

As with any change, a learning curve was anticipated. Staff, however, embraced the heparin process after seeing how it saved time and reduced stress. Nurses loved the ease of use and automated calculations that ensure proper dosing.

St. Clair provided multi-faceted education and training to obtain nursing buy-in and competency. This training support included one-on-one consultations, mandated independent study, “quick-read” newsletters, and other materials such as screen shots to detail the new procedures and why they were needed. Similar tools are used whenever the protocols are refined. These educational efforts helped propel a dramatic reduction in heparin infusion occurrences during the last year-and-a-half.

Although the catalyst for St. Clair’s initiative was the Joint Commission’s National Patient Safety Goal, the experience underscored that constant monitoring and updating of clinical protocols and leveraging technology resources are key to improving patient safety. This proactive approach is critical because best practices, standards, regulations, and reporting requirements evolve over time. By periodically reviewing and updating protocols and workflows and identifying how technology can support their adoption, hospitals can quickly identify and shore up potential weaknesses. PSQH

**Amy Georgulis** is a clinical pharmacy specialist and served as the team leader for the Anticoagulation Safety Initiative. She may be contacted at amy.georgulis@stclair.org.

**Sabina Daroski** is an internal medicine specialist and served as the physician champion for the initiative. Daroski also served as president of the medical staff for two years (2008 and 2009).

Both authors work at St. Clair Hospital in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.