

Hospital Extended Shifts: A Patient Safety Crisis

Opinion by Bill Smith © all rights reserved. January 2025

I am an advocate for improved healthcare following the tragic loss of my son, Zander, to medical malpractice. Through [Zander's memorial website](#), I provide valuable information to help others navigate the complex healthcare while honoring his memory.

A recent analysis led me to explore a novel legal approach regarding hospital liability for [extended shifts and patient safety](#). This concept could revolutionize healthcare safety standards through a simple yet powerful change: mandatory informed consent about the known risks of extended shifts.

The Hidden Danger

Hospitals traditionally implement 12+ hour shifts, primarily for financial reasons, despite clear research showing:

- 25-30% decline in cognitive function by hour 8 [Source: Lockley, S.W., et al. "Effects of Health Care Provider Work Hours and Sleep Deprivation on Safety and Performance" *Joint Commission Journal on Patient Safety*, 2024]
- 40-50% decline during hours 10-12 [Source: Rogers, A.E., et al. "The Working Hours Of Hospital Staff Nurses And Patient Safety" *Health Affairs*, 2024]
- 300% increase in medical errors after 12.5 hours [Source: Journal of Occupational Health, 2024]

Supporting Research

Recent studies confirm the dangers:

- Medication errors increase by 250% after 8 hours [Source: American Journal of Critical Care, 2024]
- Decision-making capability decreases by 35% during extended shifts [Source: BMJ Quality & Safety, 2024]
- Patient mortality increases by 6% for every hour after 8-hour shifts [Source: JAMA Internal Medicine, 2024]

A Call for Change

The degraded performance caused by long work shifts has no place in hospitals. Even one error is too many and often leads to death or permanent harm. While "preventable errors" has become a catchphrase, here's an opportunity for meaningful change through two simple steps: raising awareness and empowering patients with information.

Proposed Warning Requirement

⚠ PATIENT SAFETY NOTICE

You are receiving care during an extended shift period. Research shows:

- Healthcare worker performance declines up to 50% after 8 hours
- Error rates increase significantly during extended shifts
- Decision-making capability is measurably impaired

As a patient, you have the right to:

1. Know your provider's shift duration
2. Request care during early shift hours
3. Delay non-emergency procedures until next shift

Take Action Now

Your support can help make healthcare safer for everyone. Here's how you can help:

1. Stay Informed

- Join our mailing list for updates on this initiative [mailto:Admin@YesGFA.org/Mail_list]
- Follow our progress as we work to implement these safety measures
- Learn about hospitals adopting these warnings

2. Spread Awareness

- Share this article with friends and family
- Discuss these safety concerns with your healthcare providers
- Post about this initiative on social media using #ZandersLaw

3. Make Your Voice Heard

- Ask your local hospitals about their shift policies
- Request this warning during admission procedures
- Support hospitals that prioritize patient safety
- Send us feedback about hospitals' responses
- Share your own healthcare safety stories

Sample Email to Your Local Hospital:

Subject: Patient Safety - Extended Shift Warning Implementation

Dear [Hospital Administrator],

As a concerned community member, I'm writing to inquire about your hospital's policies regarding extended shifts and patient safety warnings. Research shows significant increases in medical errors during extended shifts. Would your facility consider implementing patient safety warnings about these known risks?

I look forward to your response regarding this important patient safety initiative.

Best regards,
[Your name]

4. **Join the Broader Patient Safety Movement** As a Champion Member of [Patients For Patient Safety \(PFPS-US\)](#), the US action arm of The **World Health Organization** (WHO), I've witnessed their significant contributions to patient safety. PFPS-US continues to make important progress in healthcare safety across the US and globally. I encourage you to join and support their efforts, including participation in events like Patient Safety Day in Washington, DC, which honors those who have lost their lives to medical errors. Your involvement in their various healthcare improvement projects would be invaluable.

Together, we can create meaningful change in healthcare safety while honoring Zander's memory. Send us an email to stay updated on our progress and learn how you can contribute to this important cause.

[Please read Zander's Justice](#)