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Toward a comprehensive hospital noise reduction research program

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Over the last few years there has been a growing interest in the control of hospital noise. This is prompted by a number of drivers: the recognition that hospital noise is a top complaint of patients, staff, and visitors; the move to a digital hospital and the impediment of speech recognition in very noisy environments; the implications of HIPAA and speech privacy on hospitals; and concerns about safety when communication is compromised by noise. Although there are now a number of studies of various issues associated with hospital noise, each views only a small piece of the very complicated problem. This presentation outlines a comprehensive noise research program designed to link acoustical measures with noise interventions and with staff and patient outcomes. Only through such an approach will it be possible to answer important questions such as which noise interventions are most effective and what hospital design strategies are most effective in terms of noise mitigation.