



American Dental Association
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September 27, 2007

The Honorable Michael Leavitt
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

America's hospitals, doctors and other health care professionals are committed to learning ways in which they can make the care they provide even safer tomorrow than it is today. That's why we supported passage of the *Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act of 2005*.

Through this groundbreaking legislation, Congress laid the foundation for Patient Safety Organizations (PSOs), potentially one of the most valuable tools in health care providers' efforts to improve safety. The PSOs would confidentially collect reports of errors, near misses and perceived risks in health care, analyze these reports across health care delivery settings, and identify both potential root causes of these safety risks and potential strategies for better protecting patients from potential harm. The aviation field, employing a similar strategy, has significantly reduced the risk of plane crashes over the past 25 years, and we, as organizations that are eager to learn and disseminate better information about how to improve safety, celebrated when the *Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act* was signed into law in August 2005.

We know that Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) staff has worked diligently to draft regulations. But, those regulations have yet to be published as a proposed rule – the first step in moving toward a final regulation; instead they are languishing in the review and clearance process. And, when they are published as a proposed rule, providers and patients still will have to wait several more months as HHS receives comments and considers amendments based on those comments.

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Improving patient safety is too important to allow this regulation to be delayed further. We urge you to promptly publish a proposed rule. We share your department's commitment to improving quality of care and are eager to play our part in creating a patient safety reporting system that will foster a health care delivery system in which no patient suffers needless harm. This is a valuable opportunity to show patients that nothing is more important than their safety.

Sincerely,

American College of Physicians
American College of Surgeons
American Dental Association
American Hospital Association
American Medical Association
The Joint Commission

CC:

Carolyn Clancy, MD, Director, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

The Honorable Ted Kennedy, Chair, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi, Ranking Member, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

The Honorable John D. Dingell, Chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee

The Honorable Joe Barton, Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce Committee