



## MEDICAL SOCIETY OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY

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### **Clearer Prescription Writing Achieved for Milwaukee Metro**

*One year old physician/business effort improves patient safety*

**Milwaukee (September 14, 2004)** – A survey of Milwaukee Metro hospitals and pharmacies found significant increases in the use of clear abbreviations on prescriptions one year after a collaborative effort began among Milwaukee area physicians, hospitals and pharmacists to reduce medication errors.

Hospitals, overall, achieved a 19% increase in prescriptions written with abbreviations considered “safe,” while outpatient pharmacies posted a 6% improvement. This is significant because ambiguously written prescriptions can lead to incorrect drugs being dispensed and/or wrong dosages.

The study, sponsored by the Medical Society of Milwaukee County (MSMC) and the Greater Milwaukee Business Foundation on Health, Inc (GMBFH), is part of an effort among area health care professions to improve patient safety. The survey covered 14 metro hospitals and ten outpatient pharmacies.

“This is an exciting first step in our efforts to continually improve patient care,” said Kathryn Leonhardt, MD, Chair of the Milwaukee Patient Safety Collaborative, a committee of the MSMC that initiated the study. “With the cooperation of the Greater Milwaukee Business Foundation on Health, Inc., we have demonstrated the significant impact of the collaborative model on improving patient safety,” Dr. Leonhardt added. Jim Wrocklage, Executive Director of the GMBFH, echoed her sentiments, “This study demonstrates the benefits of the collaborative model”.

The results of the project to improve prescription safety are being presented to business and physician leaders, and area hospital CEOs, Chiefs of Staff, and Vice Presidents of Medical Affairs on September 17 at 7:30 AM at the Research Park Center, 10000 Innovation Drive. Hospital and pharmacy staff collected the data for the study. The Medical Society served as an independent and neutral entity for data entry and analysis.

Because most organizations in the Milwaukee area participated in this initiative, success was enhanced by the collaborative effort. Organizations with electronic medical records were found to be the most successful with initiating the use of preferred abbreviations. Additionally, those organizations that refused to fill prescriptions that contained unacceptable abbreviations showed significant improvements. (Copies of the results are available upon request)

All of the institutions involved in the study have already implemented, independent of this study, measures to encourage clearer instructions related to the use of abbreviations on prescriptions. The collaborative's intent was to address this issue on a metro area level, so physicians will receive consistent and similar feedback regarding changing their abbreviation usage.

The organizations participating in this study included: **Hospitals:** *Aurora Healthcare* \*St. Luke's Medical Center, \*St. Luke's South Shore, \*Aurora Sinai Medical Center, \*West Allis Memorial Hospital, *Children's Hospital of Wisconsin*, *Columbia St. Mary's* \*Milwaukee, Ozaukee and Columbia Campuses, *Covenant Healthcare* \*Elmbrook Memorial Hospital, \*St. Francis Hospital, \*St. Michael Hospital, \*St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center, *Waukesha Memorial Hospital*, and *Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center*. **Pharmacies;** Advanced Healthcare, SC., 5 Aurora Pharmacies, and 4 Walgreen's Pharmacies.

*The Medical Society of Milwaukee County, established in 1846, represents approximately 1900 member physicians and their patients. The purpose of MSMC is to provide leadership responsive to the needs of its members and the patients they serve. MSMC collaborates with others to improve the community's health by maintaining the highest possible standards in the practice of medicine.*

*The Greater Milwaukee Business Foundation on Health, Inc. was founded in 2002 as a result of the sale of Health Care Network (HCN) to WPPN/HealthEOS. The mission of GMBFH is to undertake studies, programs and activities that promote the general health of the persons residing in the greater Milwaukee area and advance their awareness of the health related issues affecting them.*