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News release

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Release: Immediate

Toolkit available to help hospitals improve care and safety in intensive care units

DETROIT, June 2, 2004 – A toolkit designed to help hospitals improve safety and quality of care in their intensive care units is now available on the Michigan Health and Safety Coalition Web site, www.mihealthandsafety.org/icu_toolkit.html.

The Michigan Health and Safety Coalition is a group of 15 organizations that includes health plans and major employers as well as hospital, health care professional, consumer and labor organizations in the state. Its mission is to help improve health care quality and patient safety across all care settings.

The toolkit is a series of recommendations based on current research and best practices. It was developed by a nine-member volunteer workgroup of health professionals experienced in leading ICUs and improving patient safety and quality of care. The toolkit will help hospitals:

- Evaluate their ability to provide ICU care
- Identify activities and resources needed to provide optimal care
- Strengthen ongoing patient safety improvement activities and implement new ones
- Measure improvements in patient and hospital care
- Adopt a model of care that reflects evidence-based best practices

"The ultimate goal in developing the toolkit is to help ICUs in Michigan improve patient safety and patient care," said Bruno DiGiovine, M.D., a pulmonary specialist and director of the Medical Critical Care Unit at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

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"While the toolkit represents a comprehensive resource for all hospitals, it can be especially helpful for those hospitals that have limited resources," said DiGiovine who served as a member of the workgroup that developed the toolkit.

Patient safety and quality of care can be improved by implementing systems, processes and conditions that support top-quality performance, and by using intensivists.

Intensivists — physicians who specialize in providing ICU services — are the most important factor in reducing errors and improving quality, says MH&SC. An intensivist leads the ICU, admits and discharges every patient, and drives safety improvements. A shortage of intensivists makes it difficult for all hospitals to adopt an intensivist model of care, but the toolkit helps hospitals take valuable transitional steps.

ICU physician staffing is part of an annual MH&SC hospital survey that encourages hospitals to measure themselves against established benchmarks for ICU care and seven major surgeries. Survey results include the extent to which each hospital met MH&SC guidelines, and are sent to each participating hospital to allow it to compare its performance with combined peer hospital and regional hospital data.

Michigan Health and Safety Coalition members include:

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