

News release

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Tom Simmer, MD, and Janice Whitehouse assume leadership of the Michigan Health and Safety Coalition

DETROIT, Feb. 27, 2004 -- Thomas L. Simmer, M.D., vice president of Medical Affairs and chief medical officer for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, is the new chair of the Michigan Health and Safety Coalition. Janice M. Whitehouse, director of Community Health Care Initiatives for General Motors Corporation, is the new vice chair.

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.

Simmer replaces Marianne Udow, who led the coalition since its start in 2000. Udow left the coalition recently when she became head of the Michigan Family Independence Agency. The vice chair position is new for the coalition.

Simmer guides medical policy and physician relations for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. Whitehouse is responsible for leading and coordinating health care reform activities at the community level for General Motors.

As leaders of the coalition, Simmer and Whitehouse will guide a diverse group, often with competing interests, toward their common goal of improving safety for Michigan patients. The coalition's current activities include:

- The annual patient safety conference, which is April 14 and 15 in Dearborn.
- A Web-based consumer report at www.mihealthandsafety.org that provides important survey results for Michigan hospitals for eight areas of care.
- Development of a Web-based ICU toolkit, a resource for hospitals committed to improving ICU care and meeting the coalition's guidelines for care.

- Supporting research into standard practices for collecting information on nurse staffing levels and their relationship to patient safety.
- Adoption of National Quality Forum safe practices to identify areas of care where improvement initiatives are likely to be most effective.
- Exploring the advantages and feasibility of computerized physician order entry.

Michigan Health and Safety Coalition members include:

- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan
- DaimlerChrysler Corporation
- Ford Motor Company
- General Motors Corporation
- International Union, UAW
- Michigan Association of Health Plans
- Michigan Consumer Health Care Coalition
- Michigan Department of Community Health
- Michigan Education Special Services Association
- Michigan Health & Hospital Association
- Michigan Nurses Association
- Michigan Osteopathic Association
- MPRO
- Michigan Pharmacists Association
- Michigan State Medical Society

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