

Letter from the Assistant Secretary

The last year has certainly been a very busy one for patient safety. The state made sweeping changes in 2009 to protect patients in medical facilities. These included tighter safety rules at hospitals, surgery facilities and trauma centers.



Changes to the state's trauma system tightened standards for each class of trauma care and established better measures of patient outcomes.

The department also approved nine new hospitals to perform cardiac catheterization and licensed more than 100 ambulatory surgical facilities.

The year brought some other big changes as well. All of these changes are expected to improve the quality of medical care and save lives.

The state added 11 new professions in 2009 to bring the total number licensed by the department to 78.

By mid-year, the number of licensed health professionals in the state had reached nearly 360,000, a 55 percent increase from 10 years before. One out of 18 people in the state were licensed, including one in nine workers.

Preparations for and responding to an H1N1 swine flu epidemic made our jobs even bigger. I know many of you saw new responsibilities in your organizations. Between tight budgets, hiring freezes and staff illnesses, it's amazing that so much got done.

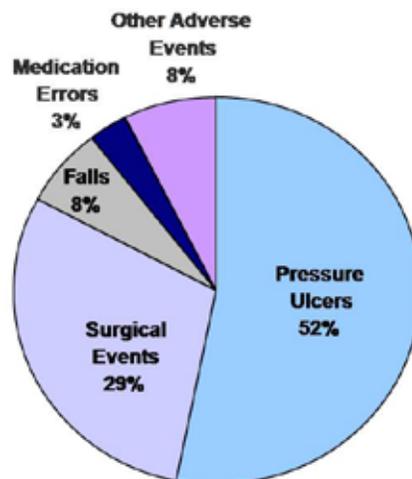
We owe many of you a great debt for the bright spots in the past year. I look forward to working with you in 2010 to protect and improve the health of people of our state.

Karen Jensen

Karen Ann Jensen, Assistant Secretary
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Featured Measure

Notification of Adverse Events



Washington medical facilities reported 652 adverse events between June 2006 and September 2009. This included:

- 342 Pressure ulcers
- 192 Surgical events
- 49 Falls
- 18 Medication errors, and
- 51 Other

Fifty-eight of 94 acute care hospitals and 52 percent of all medical facilities reported at least one event. The department recently implemented a check-in policy to encourage more complete reporting. This policy requires all eligible facilities to report each quarter, whether or not they had an event.

This approach prompts facilities to look candidly at systems and care practices that put patients at risk of harm. Several large medical centers have sharply reduced ulcers through such simple means as examining skin more often and repositioning patients.

Adverse Events Check-in - [State law](#) requires health care facilities to report confirmed adverse events to the Department of Health (Chapter 70.56 RCW). We are conducting a survey each quarter to make sure facilities are complying. The survey ensures accurate and timely reporting of adverse events. We are building a Web site to help facilities fulfill this requirement. The first report has shown a significant increase in participation.

Updates (continued)

Unintentional Overdose - The Department of Health and the Department of Social and Health Services published a joint paper on drug overdoses. It focuses on state residents who overdosed on prescription opioid pain medicine. The paper shows people enrolled in Medicaid might be at greater risk of dying from a prescription opioid overdose. On October 29, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published the paper in its *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. We also have a new Web site titled [Take as Directed](#). This site is dedicated to prescription opioid pain medicine.

Sunrise Reviews - We reviewed two health profession proposals under the [Sunrise Act](#) (Chapter 18.120 RCW). The proposals seek to increase the scopes of practice for acupuncture and optometry. We have released reports and final recommendations to the legislature and public. You can view the [reports](#) on our Web site.

Cardiac Catheterization - Legislation directed us to set standards to allow hospitals that do not have heart surgery programs to perform angioplasty, or cardiac catheterization. Using stakeholder input and an independent evaluation we developed rules with new criteria. Angioplasty is an elective heart procedure that uses balloons and stents to widen narrowed or blocked blood vessels. We added nine hospitals to the list of those that can do the procedure. The decision to add the hospitals to the list expands patient choice and access to this care.

Human Trafficking Legislation - State law directed us to post information on [human trafficking](#). We created a Web site with information on human trafficking, its affects and how to report trafficking situations. Human trafficking occurs when a person uses violence, deception, or threats to force or coerce another person to provide labor or commercial sex. All of us in the health field must be aware of this problem, which has obvious health-related issues.

HSQA Internet Portal

Our [HSQA Internet portal](#) is an important asset in getting information to you. We work to make sure the current topics are up-to-date and the publications are useful to you. We update these lists and links on a regular basis. With new legislation, the current topics list has become very important. Some of the current topics include the [Home Care Aides – Initiative 1029](#), temporary practice permits for [nursing](#) and [secretary professions](#), and information on the [new counseling professions](#). Our publications list has been updated and we now have the [HSQA strategic plan](#) available. Please check our Web site from time to time to see what we are doing and the publications we produce.

Census 2010

Next year's national census is one of our nation's most important events. It will help determine our congressional and legislative districts. It will also have a much more direct impact for us. Many national and state health care resources are distributed based on this information.

We rely on accurate counts to determine where diseases are most common – geographically, ethnically and by many other characteristics. We rely on census data to find and fill unmet needs.

The census form is easy to fill out. It will be mailed out in early 2010 and returned shortly after. Census workers will contact those who do not return the form and help them complete it. We need your help to promote participation.

The Census Bureau has a variety of free posters and informational material in different languages. Visit its Web site at www.2010census.gov, or contact Ellen Abellera at 206-718-7320 or by email at Ellen.m.abellera@census.gov. Please select some of this material and post it in your business and customer service areas to help promote participation.

H1N1 Vaccines - We need your help to monitor for potential vaccine side effects. Please report any clinically significant adverse events that happen after vaccination to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). It is important to report even if the vaccine was not given in your practice or if you are not sure if the vaccine caused the adverse event. Reporting forms and more information is available from (<http://vaers.hhs.gov/index>) or call 1-800-822-7967.

Tamper Resistant Prescription Pads - Beginning July 1, 2010, state law requires all prescriptions to be written on tamper-resistant prescription paper. The paper must be approved by the [Washington State Board of Pharmacy](#). The board will issue a seal of approval to approved print distributors. Valid prescriptions must have this seal of approval. More details are on the board's Web site.