

Interview with a Commissioner Board Chair Joyce DeMonnin

Joyce DeMonnin is Director of Public Outreach for AARP Oregon. In addition to being the current Chair of the Board of Commissioners for the Oregon Patient Safety Commission, Ms DeMonnin is an expert on elder abuse and financial exploitation. She founded The Elder Safe Program in Washington County, Oregon. Ms. DeMonnin is a 5th generation Oregonian.

Joyce's eclectic career includes work as a professional marketing consultant, newspaper reporter, trainer and small business owner. Joyce has a BA degree in Journalism from the University of Oregon and a Master of Public Health degree from Portland State University.



Q: Your position on the Commission's board represents health care consumers. How can the Patient Safety Commission engage Oregon consumers around issues of patient safety?

A: The Patient Safety Commission has a unique role as a neutral third party to discuss patient safety on behalf of all Oregonians. By collecting data on medical errors and providing reports to stakeholders, the Commission represents a perspective on medical errors from the consumer point of view –analyzing dispassionately and without blame how mistakes get made and how systems can be corrected to better help patients.

The aviation industry, though distinctly different from our health care system, has made safety “Job One.” Through objective analyses of errors and accidents, air travel has become increasingly safe. Our hope is to follow the same path with patient safety data.

Additionally, the Patient Safety Commission can be a voice for the consumer. The Commission has a unique role in being able to partner with consumer groups, such as AARP Oregon, to educate consumers on patient safety issues. It can serve as a place where consumers take their concerns. The Commission also has a role in educating policy-makers. To that end, the Commission acts as a convener of organizations interested in pursuing our “North Star” goal: Oregon will have the safest health care system in the nation by 2010.

Q: How can we as health care consumers help assure a safer health care system for all patients -- ourselves, our families, our neighbors?

A: Patients need to take a more active role in patient safety – and in health care quality. This means we need to educate ourselves on some of the most important issues surrounding patient safety -- and then take action. We can be on the alert for medical errors; we can ask our providers questions and check prescription orders against the pills we receive. We can educate ourselves through books, journals and the Oregon Patient Safety Commission [website](#); it's important to learn as much as we can because we are in a partnership with our health care provider. Finally, we can speak out about problems we've seen.

Q: Do you think Oregon can have the safest health care system in the country (our North Star goal)?

A: Oregonians pride themselves on being pioneers, so if there is a state that can do it, it's Oregon. The Patient Safety Commission has developed an intriguing and valuable matrix to systematically measure the progress we are making. These benchmarks will inform our work and lead us to our goal. It will no doubt also serve as a model for other states striving to do the same thing!