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## **Oregon makes progress on voluntary initiative to improve patient safety**

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A state system aimed at improving patient safety in medical settings is making progress after its third year of operation, according to a report released today by the Oregon Department of Human Services' State Public Health Division.

The 2003 legislature created the Oregon Patient Safety Commission to reduce the risk of serious adverse events and to encourage a culture of patient safety. It also charged the Commission with creating a confidential, voluntary system to collect reports of adverse events and to alert other medical providers as to how they can prevent similar errors.

In the third annual assessment, Dr. Grant Higginson, State Public Health Division designee to the Commission, says that the number of reports submitted by hospitals, nursing facilities and ambulatory surgery centers all increased in 2008 over 2007.

"This is good news at this point in time since the success of the program depends on robust reporting," Higginson said, "and we are strongly encouraging participating facilities both to submit reports and, where applicable, to elevate their quality and usefulness to others."

Higginson expressed concern, however, that not enough pharmacies participate to make reporting meaningful. For pharmacies, the assessment said "most national chains and many independents have shown continued resistance to participation in the program." He said it's believed only 74 of Oregon's 700 pharmacies participate because more than 60 percent are operated by chains with a national perspective. The only chain pharmacy participating is Fred Meyer, a subsidiary of the Cincinnati-based Kroger Co.

If a significant number of retail pharmacies don't enroll in the voluntary program, Higginson said, the Commission may need to revisit the possibility of mandatory reporting for them with the 2011 Legislature.

"Oregon's voluntary program is unique because providers know that the system is helping them improve the health care system rather than being punitive," says Higginson, Administrator of Office of Community Health and Health Planning in the Oregon Department of Human Services. "Giving health care providers a safe way to report their errors and share solutions is an important step towards making Oregon's system measurably the nation's safest for patients."

The independent review from the State Public Health Officer is meant to improve the reporting program. It contains recommendations to the 17-member Oregon Patient Safety Commission and suggests that for each facility type, the Commission should:

- Work with the leadership at participating facilities to improve the culture of patient safety and the quantity and quality of reporting;
- Provide more detailed feedback and guidance to facilities for improving their report quality and quantity; and
- Increase the facilities' written notification to patients and families affected by adverse events.
- In its report, the Commission reports these results for the three facility areas most advanced in the program:
  - Hospitals: Fifty-six of the state's 58 hospitals participate and, in the past three years, 73 percent of them have submitted at least one report. Hospitals submitted 108 reports of adverse events to the Commission in 2008, compared with 94 reports in 2007. The share of 2008 reports judged to be of high quality was 80 percent.
  - Nursing facilities: Of the 141 eligible facilities in the state, 108 are participating. In 2008, nine submitted at least one report for a total of 17 (compared with one in 2007); nursing facilities' only report serious events to the Commission and therefore presumably less frequent than the broader scope of events reported by hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers.
  - Ambulatory surgery centers: Although this type of reporting is new for many, 41 of the state's 82 centers are participating. They submitted 86 reports of mostly less serious adverse events in 2008 compared with 21 in 2007, a partial reporting year.

The full report is posted at:

[www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/hsp/patientsafety/recentactivitiesPHOcertification.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/hsp/patientsafety/recentactivitiesPHOcertification.shtml).