



*Improving patient, workplace,
and environmental health and
safety in healthcare*

Global Health and Safety Initiative

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From the Executive Director's Desk

Will this be the year for health care reform? As you probably know health care reform is one of the top priorities of President Obama's Administration. It is interesting how central health care costs are to the discussion. And it is not just looking for how to pay for coverage of the 46 plus million uninsured - estimated to cost \$1 trillion or more over 10 years. The White House is stating that "rapidly rising health care costs are leading our nation down a fiscally unsustainable path" and that healthcare "**reform is the single most important thing we can do for America's long term fiscal health.**".

In addition the President believes we must also "... address the underlying problems in our health care system that impede quality improvements and raise costs ... such as investing in health care information technology, patient-centered quality research, prevention and wellness, and in creating a system that pays providers for providing better care not just more care. Over time, these steps will help to produce a health care system that works better and costs less." See HealthReform.org and Whitehouse.gov (Issues, Health Care) for more information.

It is also interesting that to date we don't see anyone championing the idea that the nation could save billions of dollars by implementing what we know to be effective evidence-based design of hospitals and by implementing smarter (greener) environmental practices.

We know that we can obtain better patient outcomes and reduce medical errors, hospital acquired infections, falls, and worker injuries through the right design and buildings. But it is not just in caring for the ill that we can save money. Many of our environmental practices are harmful to our population and are leading to increased health care problems - and hence increased and avoidable

costs. Energy production and use, toxic and hazardous chemicals used in many materials and products, pollution of our air, water and land, unenlightened food practices and now, climate change are all adding a significant burden to our health ... and health care costs.

Hospitals and healthcare have an important stake in this situation. On the one hand our health care system must be prepared to provide increased care for a disease-burdened society. On the other, hospitals themselves contribute to the problem. Hospitals, by the nature of their operations, have a significant environmental footprint, and a significant patient and workplace safety issue.

The Global Health and Safety Initiative is working with our health system and non-profit partners to change this. We are fashioning a No Harm Agenda based on what we know works in the built environment and with smart environmental practices to lower costs and promote safer and healthier patients, workers and communities. As we present our ideas to the Administration and Congress during their debate of health care reform and other public health and environmental policy issues, we will ask for your support in helping to make the case.

The current situation cannot continue. For one we cannot afford it; for another we owe it to society to make the changes that we know are effective to protect and foster the public's health.

Bob Eisenman, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Global Health and Safety Initiative

Upcoming Events

More information about these and other events can be found on the [Events Page](#) of our website. To tell us about an event, please contact GHSI staff at [info AT globalhealthandsafety.org](mailto:info@globalhealthandsafety.org).

- ▶ **Save-the-Date: GHSI Summit:** Plan to join us in Washington, DC, on September 16 and 17 for the Global Health and Safety Initiative (GHSI) Summit. We're planning an exciting event which will include a public policy focus, announcements of progress, commitments and goals by health systems, governmental organizations and others and a discussion of GHSI priorities and strategic directions. We're expecting representation from CEOs and other executives from major health systems, from the Administration and Congress and other key policy leaders. Details to follow - for now please save the date.
- ▶ **GHSI Strategic Update Calls:** The purpose of these calls is to keep the greater GHSI community up to date on current activities, and to discuss topical events. Discussion topics, registration and call-in details will be posted to the [Events page of the GHSI website](#) approximately one month in advance of each call. Future calls are currently scheduled for:
 - Tuesday, August 11, 10am Pacific / noon Central / 1pm Eastern
 - Tuesday, November 10, 10am Pacific / noon Central / 1pm Eastern

We hope that you can join us.

- ▶ **HEALTHCARE DESIGN.09:** Attend [HEALTHCARE DESIGN.09](#) from October 31 -

November 3, 2009 in Orlando, Florida and immerse yourself in a solution-focused experience aimed at delivering successful outcomes for healthcare facilities now and into the future. Participate in over 60 educational sessions, 59 interactive roundtable discussions, 11 state-of-the-art facility tours, and 8 pre-conference workshops. Delve into topics that include:

- Confronting today's financial realities
- State-of-the-art solutions that improve safety and delivery of care
- The latest advancements in technologies and their applications
- The building science, management, and engineering technologies of healthcare facilities

Register before July 29 to receive early-bird discounted attendee pricing.

- ▶ **FoodMed 2009:** This third international conference to catalyze local, sustainable healthcare food and food systems will be held in Detroit, June 30, through July 1, 2009. The conference draws a diverse mix of over 250 health care leaders, dietitians, food service directors, nurses, physicians, supply chain and food vendors from across the United States. FoodMed's mission is to accelerate the health care sector's commitment to local sustainable food systems and regenerative health to improve the health of people, communities and the environment. See the [FoodMed website](#) for more information.
- ▶ **Aspen Health Forum:** The second Aspen Health Forum will be held this July 24 through 27. The gathering will feature Nobel laureates, health care industry leaders, world-class medical scientists, policymakers, athletes, best-selling authors, journalists, public officials, and interested members of the public, some 500 people in all. It is an opportunity to exchange ideas, distill insights and share new knowledge that will lead to better health for everyone. For more information and to register, see www.aspenhealthforum.org.
- ▶ **TEDMED 2009:** Set for October 27 through 30, the fifth in a series created by Marc Hodosh and Richard Saul Wurman, [TEDMED](#) celebrates conversations that demonstrate the intersection and connections between all things medical and healthcare related: from personal health to public health, devices to design and Hollywood to the hospital. Together, this encompasses more than twenty percent of our GNP in America while touching everyone's life around the globe. TEDMED 2009 will be held at the Hotel del Coronado in San Diego, California.

What's New?

Here are a few of the latest developments from GHSI's workgroups, members, and NGO partners:

- ▶ **GHSI Eco-Health Footprint Guide Released:** As part of the Global Health and Safety Initiative's mission to promote environmental leadership for improved health care and provide resources for collaborative sectoral change, GHSI is working with its partners to create the [Eco-Health Footprint](#), a sector-wide standard approach to measuring health care's impact on the environment at the individual (facility/ministry) level and at the collective (industry) level. By fully understanding our impacts, GHSI health systems,

partners, and the broader health care sector can better prioritize and manage environmental improvement efforts, resulting in more efficient, cost effective and less impactful healthcare facilities.

The Global Health and Safety Initiative has created [The Eco-Health Footprint Guide: Measuring your Organization's Impact on Public Health and the Environment](#) (Version 1.2, May 2009), a free downloadable hyperlinked document to assist organizations in getting started with the process of collecting data and measuring their footprint. This Guide is a basic introduction to the [Eco-Health Footprint](#) and provides the reader with a business case, step-by-step approach, and key footprinting concepts and resources. It also highlights issues specific to the healthcare industry and cites leading examples and case studies of footprinting among healthcare institutions.

- ▶ **New White Papers Released by the Research Collaborative:** Two white papers from the Research Collaborative were released last month. The first in the series, [Resilient Flooring & Chemical Hazards: A Comparative Analysis of Vinyl and Other Alternative for Health Care](#), evaluates the potential health impacts of vinyl flooring and the leading alternatives currently in the health care marketplace. The study inventories chemicals incorporated as contents in each of the material types or involved in their life cycle as feedstocks, intermediary chemicals or emissions. This paper was researched and written by the Healthy Building Network, and initiated by Health Care Without Harm with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

[Cleaning in Healthcare Facilities: Reducing human health effects and environmental impacts](#), is the second release from the Research Collaborative. This paper summarizes the main health and environmental impacts related to conventional surface cleaning, describes a systems approach for designing and implementing healthier and environmentally friendlier cleaning strategies for the healthcare sector, and indicates areas where future research and policy initiatives are needed. This paper was developed by the research team at the Sustainable Hospitals Program, a program of the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, with support from the Pioneer Portfolio of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Both of these white papers are available from [GHSI's Document Library](#) and from the [Research Workgroup page](#).

- ▶ **New Fact Sheet on Perfluorinated Compounds (PFCs) Released:** A recently released fact sheet, [Perfluorinated Compounds \(PFCs\) and Human Health Concerns](#), discusses exposures, health effects, current status, and alternatives for PFCs. You can find this and other materials fact sheets in [GHSI's Document Library](#).
- ▶ **Health Sector Can Lead the Fight Against Climate Change:** The World Health Organization and Health Care Without Harm released a discussion draft report, [Healthy Hospitals, Healthy Planet, Healthy People - Addressing Climate Change in Health Care Settings](#). The report focuses on how the health sector can play a leadership role in reducing the magnitude and consequences of global warming by reducing its climate footprint, and provides examples from around the world of hospitals taking measures to reduce their climate footprint while improving public health. It outlines seven steps health care systems can take to move toward climate friendly health care and it identifies a

series of opportunities at the global, national and local levels. Read the [press release](#) and [download the report](#).

- ▶ **Healthcare Leadership: Evidence-Based Design Resources for Healthcare Executives:** Healthcare leaders can learn more about evidence-based design through two free online webcasts, produced by The Center for Health Design and Georgia Tech. Former hospital CEO, Blair Sadler and Architecture Professor, Craig Zimring help hospital leaders understand the importance and benefits of implementing their suggested evidence-based design features and strategies. View these two short webcasts and download their associated white papers at www.healthdesign.org/hcleader.
- ▶ **CleanMed 2009: Snapshot:** The annual CleanMed 2009 conference was held in Chicago May 18-20, 2009. It attracted 643 attendees from a range of disciplines representing a robust cross section of the health care sector. The mission of the conference is to accelerate the health care sector's commitment to environmental sustainability and regenerative health to improve the health of people and the environment. Keynote addresses were delivered by Howard Frumkin, MD, MPH, DrPH, Director of the National Center for Environmental Health and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and [Ray Baxter, PhD, Senior Vice President for Community Benefit, Research and Health Policy at Kaiser Permanente](#).

Conference attendees were offered 35 separate panel sessions in a variety of important content areas for health care, including climate change, environmental purchasing, green building, pharmaceuticals management, healthy food, safer materials, leadership & advocacy, waste management and nursing. In addition, several "pre-conference" workshops delved into some of these issues in more depth. An exhibit hall provided the opportunity to learn about environmentally preferable products and services, and also featured a series of posters by academic and other researchers on specific initiatives. Some conference highlights:

- The annual Practice Greenhealth Awards Dinner where hospitals from across the country received recognition of their achievements in environmental sustainability
- Presentation of the International Regenerative Health Care Award to Satinath Sarangi representing the Sambhavna Clinic in Bhopal, India. The Sambhavna Clinic provides medical care and other support to survivors of the Union Carbide gas which happened in Bhopal 25 years ago
- Book signing by Preston Maring, MD. Dr. Maring has championed farmers markets at Kaiser Permanente medical centers and has written a cook book with his favorite recipes and advice for healthful eating
- Tour of Advocate Lutheran General Hospital's new Tower, which is seeking LEED Gold certification

CleanMed is the premier environmental conference for health care leaders. The next CleanMed will be in Baltimore MD on May 11-13, 2010.

Workgroups

Interested in joining the GHSI and participating in one or more of these workgroups? Please contact GHSI staff at [info AT globalhealthsafety.org](mailto:info@globalhealthsafety.org), and we'll put you in touch with the appropriate workgroup leader to get you started.

- ▶ The focus of the **Research Collaborative** is to help provide funding and facilitate research that links better building designs, greener and safer materials and products and improved approaches to operations that will reduce the hazards associated with negative health affects.
- ▶ The **Sustainable Operations** workgroup strategy focuses on the acceleration of best practices for operations among the GHSI partners and the entire healthcare sector, including Environmental Services, Hazardous Materials, Safety, Dietary/Food Services, and Risk Management.
- ▶ The **Healthy Purchasing** workgroup will use the collective purchasing power of participating hospital systems and their Group Purchasing Organizations (GPOs) to transform the market for healthcare products and technologies that meet the goals of patient and workplace safety and environmental sustainability, including identifying priority products and developing a database of environmentally preferable product specifications.
- ▶ The **Built Environment** workgroup will provide access to an array of "best practices" to implement strategies that augment patient safety and workplace safety. These strategies also will maximize the sector's environmental performance while reducing healthcare's eco-footprint and contributing to the health and safety of patients and workers.

Have Questions?

Visit our [GHSI website](http://ghsi.org) for frequent program updates and information about upcoming meetings and events. If you have direct questions about becoming a member of GHSI, please contact GHSI Executive Director, Bob Eisenman, Ph.D., at 510-418-6197 or [beisenman AT globalhealthsafety.org](mailto:beisenman@globalhealthsafety.org).

Thank you for your help. Working together through GHSI, we can transform the health care industry and improve patient, worker, workplace and environmental safety.

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