



*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

"Knowledge is power," stated Sir Francis Bacon in 1597. And some 200 years later Goethe added "Knowing is not enough; we must apply." I want to continue the theme of applied knowledge by bringing to your attention several bodies of work that are attempting to bring greater knowledge about environmentally sustainable and design approaches that can contribute to improvements for patients, workers and the community.

One of these is a just released paper, *[A Research Agenda for Advancing Patient, Worker and Environment Health and Safety in the Health Care Sector](#)*, the work of the Health Care Research Collaborative - a project of Health Care Without Harm and the Global Health and Safety Initiative, coordinated by faculty from the University of Illinois at Chicago with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The paper is based on interviews with representatives from GHSI and other leading health systems, government agencies and academic centers and seeks to prioritize a health care industry research agenda on how smarter environmental approaches and building design can contribute to better outcomes.

The research priorities have been organized into the following four major categories with comments on the current state of knowledge and suggested research priorities in each:

- The Business Case for Sustainability and Improved Patient/Worker Safety and Health in Hospitals and Health Care Facilities
- The Impact of Hospital and Health Care Building Design, Construction, Renovation and Materials on Patients, Workers and the Environment
- The Collateral Health Impacts of Pharmaceuticals and Other Chemicals Used in Hospitals

and Health Care Facilities

- The Impact of Hospital and Health Care Institutional Organization and Operations on Patients, Workers and the Environment

The Health Care Research Collaborative has also released white papers on some important health care environmental questions - *[The Accuracy of Alternatives to Mercury Sphygmomanometers](#)*, *[Resilient Flooring & Chemical Hazards: A Comparative Analysis of Vinyl and Other Alternatives for Health Care](#)*, and *[Cleaning in Healthcare Facilities: Reducing Human Health Effects and Environmental Impacts](#)*. A fourth white paper on the issue of pharmaceuticals in the environment is in preparation.

GHSI partners are also contributing to our applied knowledge. The [Healthy Building Network](#) has just announced the public opening of a remarkable building materials database, Pharos, which includes a building products library and searchable chemical and material library - see it at www.pharosproject.net. The [Green Guide for Health Care](#), in collaboration with [Practice Greenhealth](#), is launching a one-year Green Guide for Health Care Operations Pilot Program for healthcare organizations engaged in any or all aspects of green operations initiatives, based on Green Guide v2.2 Operations section. [The Center for Health Design](#) just completed its Health Design.09 conference, providing the latest health care design information aimed at delivering successful outcomes for healthcare facilities. And GHSI and its partners are combining efforts to produce a Healthy Hospitals Agenda that will provide a roadmap for environmental sustainability and building design that can lead to improvements in patient, worker and community health and safety.

GHSI and our partners are focusing on practical applied knowledge for health care, especially where environmental sustainability approaches can be shown to produce better outcomes for patient, worker and/or community health and safety. Knowledge is powerful - applied knowledge even more so.

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@globalhealthsafety.org.

- ▶ **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, February 9, 10am Pacific / noon Central / 1pm Eastern
- Tuesday, May 11, 10am Pacific / noon Central / 1pm Eastern

We hope that you can join us.

What's New?

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

- ▶ **Health Care Research Collaborative Announces Two New White Papers:** [A *Research Agenda for Advancing Patient, Worker and Environmental Health and Safety in the Health Care Sector*](#) focuses on research within the health care sector in the US centering on patient, worker and environmental health and safety ("the three safeties"). It describes the Health Care Without Harm / Global Health and Safety Initiative (HCWH/GHSI) Research Collaborative, from whose work this Research Agenda was developed, and identifies research priorities in the near- and long-term at the intersection of the three safeties. With this paper, the Research Collaborative aims to promote discussion and encourage the development of research projects in key areas.

Due to the move towards removal of mercury from health care settings, alternatives to the mercury sphygmomanometer are in common use in many hospitals and clinics. Concern has been voiced regarding the accuracy of these alternative devices. [The *Accuracy of Alternatives to Mercury Sphygmomanometers*](#) by Susan Buchanan, MD, MPH, comprises a review of the medical literature that evaluates the accuracy of mercury, aneroid, and oscillometric blood pressure devices.

Both papers, along with the two previously published Research Collaborative white papers on vinyl flooring and greener cleaners, are available from [GHSI's Document Library](#). For more information about the Research Collaborative, see the Workgroups section below.

- ▶ **Pharos Publicly Launched:** GHSI partner the [Healthy Building Network](#) is pleased to publicly launch the [Pharos project](#). Join with leading architecture and design firms, construction firms and health care systems that have already subscribed to Pharos. Use the system to research green building materials and align your purchasing power with your values and your commitment to transparency. Support manufacturers who share that commitment. For more information and to sign up, visit the [Pharos project website](#).
- ▶ **Prescription for Success: Don't Bother Nurses:** For nurses, constant interruptions while tending to a patient are part of the job; but a distraction that happens while administering medication can have deadly results. According to the Institute of Medicine, errors in administering medication cause about 400,000 preventable injuries in hospitals and about \$3.5 billion in extra medical costs a year. This San Francisco Chronicle article examines a University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) program to improve accuracy in administering drugs - with an emphasis on reducing interruptions that often lead to mistakes. "Medication errors make up the largest slice of the medical error pie," said Julie Kliger, director of UCSF's Integrated Nurse Leadership Program. "Improving these numbers is a huge benefit to patient safety and, secondarily, it reduces costs." Results from the program indicated a nearly 88 percent drop in errors over 36 months. [Read the San Francisco Chronicle article](#).
- ▶ **Health Care Leaders Ask for Strong Climate Agreement to Protect Public Health:** Health leaders from across the US have sent a letter to President Obama to call his

attention to the impact of climate change on public health and the resulting challenges to the healthcare sector to meet increased demands for services. Led by [Health Care Without Harm](#) (HCWH), those signing the letter include the American Public Health Association, the American Nurses Association, and several other health organizations representing the interests of nearly three million health care professionals. The letter asks the Obama Administration to take a strong position at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change meeting in Copenhagen, December 7-18, 2009, to protect public health, and outlines a "[Prescription for a Healthy Planet](#)" that advocates four remedies to guide the talks: strengthen public health, commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, transition to clean energy, and finance global solutions to climate change. [Read the HCWH press release](#) and [read the Letter to President Obama](#).

And in Barcelona earlier this month at the last session leading up to the Copenhagen Climate talks, some of the world's largest medical, nursing and public health organizations gathered to call on world leaders to take bold action to address climate change to avert what could become a global public health crisis. These organizations are also advocating for climate policies packaged under the "[Prescription for a Healthy Planet](#)", an initiative that aims to increase focus on the effects on human health of climate change and to bring the voice of the health care sector to climate negotiations. [See the public interest ad](#) and [read the HCWH press release](#).

- ▶ **Green Guide for Health Care Seeks Participants for 2010 Operations Pilot Program:** The [Green Guide for Health Care](#), in collaboration with [Practice Greenhealth](#), is launching a one-year Green Guide for Health Care Operations Pilot Program in early 2010 for healthcare organizations engaged in any or all aspects of green operations initiatives, based on Green Guide v2.2 Operations section. The intent of the Operations Pilot is to create a learning community of peers to share best practices across the different areas that comprise sustainable health care operations using web-based tools and resources, and to facilitate market transformation as the Green Guide evolves to meet the sustainability guidance needs of the healthcare community. Benefits of participation include recognition on the Green Guide website as an early adopter, a leadership role in shaping new tool development, and enhanced access to professional services. For an Expression of Interest application, or for more information, email info@gghc.org.
- ▶ **Advanced Energy Design Guide for Small Hospitals and Healthcare Facilities Updated:** The [Advanced Energy Design Guide series](#), developed through the collaboration of ASHRAE, the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IES), and the US Green Building Council (USGBC), with support from the Department of Energy (DOE), has released an updated issue for small hospitals and healthcare facilities up to 90,000 square feet in size. The guide offers contractors and designers the tools, including recommendations for practical products and off-the-shelf technology, needed for achieving a 30% energy savings compared to buildings that meet the minimum requirements of ANSI/ASHRAE/IESNA Standard 90.1-1999. [Download the Advanced Energy Design Guides](#).
- ▶ **The Chicago Green Health Care Initiative (CGHCI):** The CGHCI assembles a pool of

resources to help health care providers achieve significant operational improvements, reduction in operating costs and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, thereby lessening the impact on public health. By developing a high profile, comprehensive model for green healthcare, the voluntary-based CGHCI will demonstrate that quality of patient care can not only be maintained but can be improved via green practices. In addition, it will show that hospitals, community clinics and ordinary citizens can save millions of dollars through these practices. The CGHCI will serve as an environmental health model for other industries, just as the City of Chicago will become a model for other cities that seek to reduce their impact on climate change and the environment. CGHCI partners include the City of Chicago, Health Care Without Harm, US Environmental Protection Agency Region 5, US Department of Energy, Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council, Clinton Climate Initiative, Practice Greenhealth, University of Illinois in Chicago - Center of Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety, and Chicago area hospitals committed to leading the challenge to reduce healthcare's environmental footprint.

To learn more about joining the Chicago Green Health Care Initiative, please contact Mary Larsen at 866-698-3336 or mlarsen@practicegreenhealth.org. [Read this Chi Town Daily News article](#) on this initiative.

- ▶ **Armada Named President of Advocate Lutheran General:** Effective November 30, 2009, [Anthony A. Armada has been named president of Advocate Lutheran General Hospital and Advocate Lutheran General Children's Hospital](#), Park Ridge, Ill. Armada comes to Advocate after five successful years as president and CEO of Henry Ford Hospital and Health Network, Detroit, where he led the system's three hospitals, 26 ambulatory medical centers and its partnership with a 1,000-physician medical group. In his time there, Armada engineered a \$90 million turnaround, posting a \$60 million profit last year and exceeding operation margins and cost targets for 14 consecutive quarters. Bill Santulli, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Advocate Health Care, said officials at Advocate were excited to have Armada join their senior leadership team. "He has an impressive track record of leading some of the nation's top healthcare organizations," Santulli said of Armada.
- ▶ **European Organizations Demand Phase-Out of Mercury Usage in Clinical Settings:** Last month the European Commission (EC) released a report confirming that mercury sphygmomanometers are not necessary in healthcare or routine clinical practice. European environmental and health organizations have been campaigning for many years to end the use of mercury substances in hospitals and other settings; with the release of this report, these organizations are demanding a rapid phase-out of mercury in healthcare. [Read the press release from Health Care Without Harm](#) and [read the EC report](#).

Workgroups

Interested in joining the GHSI and participating in one or more of these workgroups? Please contact GHSI staff at 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. This quarter's call was on developing research projects suggested in the recently released [Research Agenda](#). Several members of the group expressed interest in working on new projects on which the Collaborative is moving ahead. The next call will be in January 2010; please email [Kate Yoshida](#) to be added to the group list.

- ▶ 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. The materials subcommittee of the Built Environment workgroup will provide information and tools, such as the Pharos database tool, to help systems procure building products that are healthier for patients, staff and the community.

Have Questions?

Visit our [GHSI website](#) 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@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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