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Bringing a public health perspective to quality and patient safety

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Five years ago, when the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* last featured the theme of quality and patient safety, my predecessor's message in the Dean's Corner focused on the efforts of the Madison Patient Safety Collaborative (MPSC), in which the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) and UW Health are deeply involved. In the intervening years, this group has continued to work hard on many aspects of quality and patient safety in our community.

For example, MPSC workgroups are studying ways to reduce falls among Madison's hospitalized patients, reconcile medication usage from setting to setting, improve hand hygiene, prevent surgical infections, and enhance access to electronic medical records across providers.

The Wisconsin Collaborative on Healthcare Quality (WCHQ) is a statewide initiative that shares the goal of improving quality of care and patient safety. My two colleagues, Drs. Jeffrey Grossman, CEO of the UW Medical Foundation, and Carl Getto, SMPH, associate dean for hospital affairs, both serve on the WCHQ executive board.

The WCHQ has developed a number of performance measures by which its 21 health care professional member organizations have agreed to be compared. Each of the measures represents a specific aspect of care for a defined period of time to provide a "snapshot" of an organization's performance in relation to an evidence-

based standard—and to one another. The measures include broad issues such as safety, efficiency, timeliness, equity, effectiveness, and patient-centeredness, as well as clinical topics such as critical care, diabetes, surgery, pneumonia, heart care, hypertension, post partum care, and women's health.

Faculty at the SMPH also have been conducting relevant research for several years, including collaborations with faculty members in the Department of Industrial Engineering. The interdisciplinary group is working on systems design, informatics, and human factors involved in implementing safe practices. Thanks to all of these efforts, Wisconsin has become a virtual laboratory for the development of quality measures and it is recognized widely as a pioneer in the area of quality improvement.

The SMPH will be contributing in important new ways to this national leadership role as it continues its transformation into a school of medicine and public health. One of the goals of this recent transformation, which has begun to permeate everything we do, is to understand how the knowledge and insights gained from basic science and clinical investigations translate into what actually happens in doctor-patient encounters. At the same time, we must then study the impact in the "real world," outside of the controlled environment of the research setting.

The transformation is all about making sure that what we learn in the academic medical center gets rolled

out into communities across the state, where the information can be put to good use. Using the tools of public health, which include outcome studies, we will help advance safety and quality, not just in Madison but in hospitals, clinics, and doctors' offices throughout the state.

The Wisconsin Partnership Program is a vital component and resource in our efforts. One concrete example is its support of the Health Innovation Program (HIP). HIP's stated vision is to "create a national model of excellence in health innovation that inspires and supports improvements in local and statewide health care delivery." Quality is a big part of this program, with a goal of actively sharing resources, information, and best practices with health care practitioners, policy makers, and communities.

The Wisconsin Partnership Program also sponsors the Wisconsin Network for Health Research (WiNHR), a statewide clinical research collaboration. One WiNHR pilot study involves monitoring African American men in Milwaukee who are taking warfarin, the anticoagulant that was developed by UW researchers.

This study reflects our recognition that quality and safety issues are especially cogent for the disadvantaged, who often do not have access to the current standard of care, let alone an enhanced one. Our school's new focus on the integration of public health and medicine will help ensure that these advances extend to the entire spectrum of patients and to all of Wisconsin.

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