



## THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1200 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

HEALTH AFFAIRS

June 7, 2011

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

The Military Health System (MHS) supports the Partnership for Patients initiative which brings together leaders of major hospitals, employers, physicians, nurses, and patient advocates, along with State and Federal Governments, in a shared effort to make hospital care safer, more reliable, and less costly.

The two goals of this new partnership are:

- *Keeping patients from getting injured or sicker.* Accidents happen, and too often patients in hospitals experience preventable harm. The initiative seeks to increase efforts to prevent patient harm in hospitals. By the end of 2013, preventable hospital-acquired conditions would **decrease by 40 percent** compared to 2010.
- *Helping patients heal without complication.* Patients are often at their most vulnerable state when leaving the hospital to continue healing at home, in an assisted living facility, or in other care settings. The initiative seeks to improve continuity and effectiveness of care during transitions from one care setting to another and, thereby, to decrease preventable hospital readmissions within 30 days of discharge. By the end of 2013, preventable complications during a transition from one care setting to another would be decreased, such that all hospital readmissions would be **reduced by 20 percent**, compared to 2010.

Achieving these goals will save lives and prevent injuries for millions of Americans. Furthermore, this partnership has the potential to save billions of dollars across the health care system over the next 3 years. This will help put our Nation on the path toward a more sustainable health care system.

### **Our Partnership Commitment Pledge**

These goals can only be achieved with a broad and deep commitment from entities across the Nation. The Federal Government, hospitals, clinicians, patients, employers, unions, health plans, States, and others join together to pledge our support to the goals of the Partnership for Patients initiative to achieve a safer, higher quality health care system for all Americans. We support the aims of improving care, improving people's health, and reducing the costs of care by improving quality.

The participants in the Partnership for Patients pledge to join in a shared effort to save thousands of lives, stop millions of injuries, and take important steps toward a more dependable and affordable health care system.

**The Federal Government:** The MHS pledges to work to attain the goals of the Partnership for Patients initiative by building on work already underway, and supporting local initiatives, to improve the quality of care. We pledge, to the extent allowed by law, to:

- Provide resources for technical support to physicians, nurses, and other clinicians working in and out of hospitals to test large scale implementation of care delivery models that make patient care safer and to support effective transitions of patients from hospitals to other settings. We will customize these tools to meet the local needs of different settings and clinicians;
- Develop better measures of the quality and safety of care patients receive to help support hospital efforts to improve care, and provide better information to help consumers and employers in their decision-making. We will develop these measures through public processes with the goal of reducing the burden on providers while collecting the best information possible;
- Seek to learn from, and be a partner with, the private sector in using incentives to drive improvements in health care safety, quality, and value. We will encourage innovations, while recognizing that the payment and other terms entered into between hospitals and other providers and private payers are matters of individual contract and negotiation; and
- Ensure that MHS facilities will implement the tools that are proven to reduce hospital-acquired conditions and facilitate better care transitions.

The MHS looks forward to working with public and private health care organizations committed to reducing preventable patient harm. The point of contact for this issue is LTC Donald Robinson, who can be reached by phone at (703) 681-0064, or by e-mail at [Donald.Robinson@tma.osd.mil](mailto:Donald.Robinson@tma.osd.mil).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Woodson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Jonathan Woodson, M.D.

cc:

Surgeon General of the Army  
Surgeon General of the Navy  
Surgeon General of the Air Force