

March 3, 2011

TO: MEMBERS OF THE AGING COMMITTEE
FROM: JEAN REXFORD for CT CENTER FOR PATIENT SAFETY

**PLEASE SUPPORT SB 24--
AN ACT CONCERNING HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS OF MEDICARE RECIPIENTS**

On behalf of the members of The Connecticut Center for Patient Safety and all of our family members, we thank you for raising SB 24, which has the purpose of reviewing the admissions procedures for medicare recipients.

For quite some time, the Connecticut Center for Patient Safety has been advocating for better procedures and protections for medicare recipients (our Senior Citizens and Older Adults) in hospitals and physicians offices. Senate Bill 24 is a great first step and we are grateful that the Aging Committee is pursuing legislation to help medicare recipients in the area of hospital admissions procedures.

Recent studies provide some alarming truths about the grim realities facing many medicare patients.

1. *HealthGrades* has just released a new study confirming the growing evidence of preventable deaths. *HealthGrades* is a leading independent ratings organization and over an eleven-year period, has reviewed more than 140 million Medicare patient records. *HealthGrades* has estimated that there has been over 500,000 preventable deaths of Medicare patients in the last decade.
2. Rosemary Gibson, formerly at Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and author of the books *White Wall of Silence* and *The Treatment Trap*, calculates that there are 250,000 preventable deaths each year from health care harm, which is 10% of all deaths in the U.S. annually. The breakdown for her estimates are as follows – roughly 100,000 from medical mistakes, 100,000 from infections, 19,000 from unnecessary surgery, 15,000 from radiation from CT scans and the remainder from medication interactions/chaotic prescribing.
3. In October of 2010, the Office of Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services published the results of a well researched study that confirms that our Medicare patients are facing a real crisis in our hospitals. The study concluded that of the nearly one million Medicare beneficiaries discharged from Hospitals in October 2009, about one in seven experienced an adverse event inside the hospital. Physician-reviewers determined that 44% of these harmful events were preventable. Not only were patients put at risk and sometimes harmed, but the report concluded that the extra treatment required because of these errors generated several billion dollars in preventable additional costs to our system.

These reports and statistics are still not seen as urgent problems in our nation and in Connecticut. We respectfully believe that all interested parties must work together to create a culture of patient safety in our state. We can no longer accept “business as usual.” Instead, public health officials, hospitals, medical and nursing schools, the media and most importantly, the public-the health care consumers must all come together to address the problem.

Thank you for support for our older adults and medicare recipients.