



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Agency for Healthcare
Research and Quality

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MAY 02 2007

The Honorable John D. Dingell
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dingell:

I am responding to your request that AHRQ consider pursuing, through the Institute of Medicine (IOM), the continued study of medical errors associated with physician and resident work schedules. I would like to thank you and your colleagues for your continued support of AHRQ's mission to improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans, and for your specific interest in reducing preventable medical errors associated with healthcare providers' work schedules.

As evidenced by AHRQ's long-standing commitment to research on this topic, we strongly support the continued study of work schedules. Sleep deprivation and fatigue resulting from extended-duration work shifts can endanger patients, providers, and the general public. The issue of work schedules is multifaceted and involves numerous stakeholders. To this end, AHRQ agrees on the value of an IOM study focused on assessing the impact of reduced work hours and recommending strategies to facilitate the adoption of reasonable work schedules to improve safety in the healthcare work environment.

We would be pleased to meet with the Committee to discuss the proposed study in further detail. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Mr. Boyce Ginieczki at 301-427-1214.

An identical letter has been sent to Representatives Barton, Stupak and Whitfield.

Sincerely,

Carolyn M. Clancy, M.D.
Director