

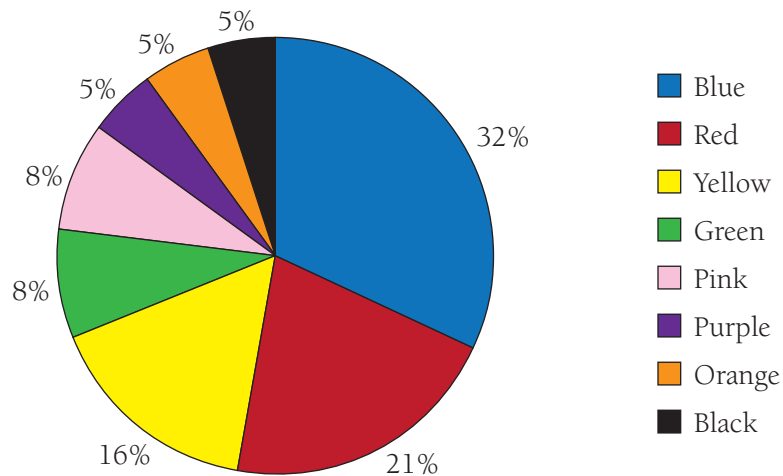
# Executive Summary

Improving patient safety, including reducing risks of injury or harm, has been a strategic focus for the Michigan Health & Hospital Association (MHA) through its Keystone Center for Patient Safety & Quality. As the MHA seeks to further hospitals' role in achieving the best in patient care through its agenda of accountability, the association launched the first patient safety organization in Michigan. The MHA Patient Safety Organization (PSO) is asking hospitals to improve communication consistency and reduce the risk of patient harm by standardizing color-coded patient alert wristbands.

In December 2005, the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Reporting System issued a *Patient Safety Advisory* that received national attention. This advisory highlighted an incident that occurred in a hospital in which clinicians nearly failed to rescue a patient experiencing a cardiopulmonary arrest because the patient had been incorrectly designated as do-not-resuscitate (DNR). The source of confusion was a nurse who mistakenly placed a yellow wristband on the patient. In that hospital, a yellow wristband meant DNR. In a nearby hospital where the nurse also worked, yellow meant "restricted extremity" (meaning that this arm is not to be used for drawing blood or obtaining intravenous (IV) access) which was her intended alert. Fortunately in this case, another nurse recognized the mistake, and the patient was resuscitated.

This type of "near miss" could occur in Michigan facilities as well. Based on a survey sent to MHA-member hospitals in June 2008, Michigan is quite diverse with regard to colors being used to indicate allergy, fall risk and DNR. Based on survey results, five different colors were being used to indicate allergy, seven different colors to indicate fall risk, and eight colors to identify patients with DNR orders.

**Wristband colors used to designate Do-Not-Resuscitate in Michigan**



As of October 2008, more than 25 states have standardized color-coded patient alert wristbands. Consistent with these states, the MHA PSO is implementing a color-coded patient alert wristband standardization initiative focused on the three most commonly used patient alert wristband colors: red to indicate allergy, yellow to indicate fall risk, and purple to indicate DNR. **The purpose of the**

**initiative is to consistently and effectively communicate an alert to a health care provider if the patient has an allergy, is a fall risk, and/or carries a DNR order.** With a standardized method of communicating these risks, the potential for confusion when patients, physicians and nurses travel between different hospitals is greatly reduced.

The MHA PSO's goal is to gain a 100 percent participation rate from Michigan hospitals by June 1, 2009, ensuring the consistency of these three alerts. In addition, the MHA is collaborating with surrounding state associations to ensure communication consistency and awareness across the Great Lakes region.

**While the MHA encourages standardization of these three patient alert wristband colors to ensure clear and consistent messaging throughout its membership, it is important to note that this initiative does not require those hospitals that presently do not use color-coded patient alert wristbands to adopt the practice.**

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For more information, contact Morgan Martin at (517) 886-8372 at the MHA.

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