

egy, sometimes called "academic detailing," repeatedly has been shown to be effective in changing physicians' prescribing patterns.<sup>11,12</sup>

The project described by Lee et al is a first and necessary step in a valuable quality improvement effort. It provides the data foundation for future improvement. Their strategy of sending informational letters to physicians found at variance probably will not result in a great deal of improvement, since the majority of the variances represent failures of the system and not the purposeful misconduct or ignorance of the physician. If this endeavor is approached in the spirit of continuous improvement, the improvement process will involve representatives of the medical staff, nursing, and information systems, in addition to microbiology, clinical pharmacy, and infectious disease. The collaboration of microbiology and clinical pharmacy can describe what goes wrong and how often it goes wrong, but wider input will be necessary to determine why things go wrong and what to do about it.

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## NIOSH Accused of Concealing Respirator Deficiencies

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The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is reviewing allegations of a former senior NIOSH official, Nelson A. Leidel, that respirator deficiencies were concealed during the respirator certification process. In a lengthy document from Leidel to NIOSH Director Linda A. Rosenstock, Leidel asserted that NIOSH has engaged in questionable practices related to certification

of respirators over a 22-year period that included use of certification criteria that do not assess respirator performance adequately. Leidel retired from NIOSH on September 1, 1994, after more than 20 years with the job safety and health institute. From 1987 to 1992 he managed the project to revise the respirator certification requirements.

A NIOSH spokesman said the institute is convening an internal task force to study the 75-page critique of NIOSH's certification procedures from

Leidel, which has been included in the rulemaking docket for NIOSH's recent proposal for revising its certification procedures. NIOSH Director Rosenstock said that the issues raised by Leidel were complex and required some study and that NIOSH will issue a detailed response.

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