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NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Letter to Acting Director of Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

Washington, D.C. — The House Energy and Commerce Committee has opened an investigation into preventable medical errors and has asked the Department of Health and Human Services to determine whether the long work hours are among the most serious threats to patient safety.

Committee Chairman John Dingell, D-Mich., and U.S. Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, the committee's ranking member, together with U.S. Reps. Bart Stupak, D-Mich., and Ed Whitfield, R-Ky., asked the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to continue its work on the subject.

AHRQ funded a study, which was published in December 2006, entitled, Impact of Extended-Duration Shifts on Medical Errors, Adverse Events, and Attention Failures. The study found medical errors resulting in adverse events, including death, linked to sleep-deprived and over-extended medical residents and interns, substantiating previously held concerns

about physician work schedules.

The committee members have asked AHRQ to fund an Institute of Medicine study similar in design to its 2004 study of work hours of nurses that involved the extended work schedules of physicians and residents.

[Read the HHS letter »](#)

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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