



## DUKE UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEM

Michael Cuffe, MD, FACC  
Vice President for Medical Affairs

August 3rd, 2005

Dear Patient or family member,

I am writing today to update you and your family on the events last winter at Durham Regional and Duke Health Raleigh Hospitals. You are someone to whom we owe a special obligation; there is nothing more important than the best care of patients at Duke.

Please allow me to introduce myself. Last fall, our Chancellor, Dr. Victor Dzau, envisioned a senior leadership position responsible for Medical Affairs to advocate for patients and to help ensure the best quality in all areas of care. I assumed these responsibilities on July 1, 2005, and since then have been working closely with Dr. Karen Frush, the Health System Chief Safety Officer. I have been a practicing cardiologist in this community for a number of years, and a champion for safety programs and best practices in medicine.

Although, we are currently experiencing very few calls to the hotline, I wanted to assure you of our on-going commitment to provide information and resources regarding issues related to the hydraulic fluid incident. I would like to address some of the more common questions and requests-

- How do patients stay informed?  
We have created a website with links to frequently asked questions, relevant documents, and on which we'll post future updates. The site "<http://hydraulicfluidfacts.dukehealth.org>", will serve as our primary means of communication going forward, and you may register on the site to be notified of updates. Alternatively, if you prefer, you can call our hotline (919-286-3232 ext. 223) to request periodic printed updates of the same information. Related medical records can also be requested, free of charge, through this number. The hotline, the clinic, the medical officers of the hospitals, and the rest of the Duke team will remain available to you for any concerns.
- Is there ongoing analysis?  
Experts in exposure and toxicology continue to help us put this incident in context and are helping Duke in further studies. When these are complete we will share the results with you; please let us know how you would like to be notified of updates via the website or hotline. Since January steps have been taken in many areas to improve the quality of our care, and especially to make sure similar errors don't occur. There is still work to be done, and I look forward to sharing these further results and to helping improve the care and service throughout the Duke Health System.

- Will there be any follow-up?  
Duke cares about your continued wellbeing. We are establishing a follow-up program based on a standard surveillance method for monitoring side effects that collects information from many places. Under this patient-confidentiality protected program we bring together reports from hotline calls, doctor's reports, hospitalizations since last winter, and other sources including Duke health records and then carefully review. You can help in this process by using our patient hotline yourself, or with your permission having your physician report symptoms or changes in your health through the hotline or to my office address below. More ways to report changes in your health will be available on the website shortly, and I would encourage your participation in helping us understand this exposure. If this surveillance indicates any increased risk to our patients, we will notify you immediately.
- Do patients have a voice at Duke University Health System?  
Each of the hospitals in Duke's Health System receives advice from the community through Patient-Visitor Relations, customer surveys, complaints, and community membership on our governance boards. We are also grateful for the host of volunteers throughout our hospitals and clinics. This incident, however, has highlighted the need for more focused advocacy within Duke's senior leadership, and so we have created a new patient advocacy board. This board will complement our existing lines of advice and will meet regularly to help Duke's leadership focus on patient's needs across all areas.

You might see more about this episode in the local news; I want you to know that we take the concerns raised by our patients very seriously. I would also like to personally assure you that beyond the continuing care of your physician and the services of Duke's Occupational and Environmental clinic, hotline and physicians, we will remain available to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Cuffe MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small "MD" written above the end of the name.

Michael Cuffe, MD, FACC  
Vice President for Medical Affairs  
Duke University Health System  
DUMC Box 3230  
Durham, NC 27710

Hotline number (919) 286-3232 ext. 223 (Ms. Ellen O'Briant)

cc. Dr. Karen Frush, Chief Patient Safety Officer  
Dr. Victor Dzau, Chancellor, Duke University Health System  
David McQuaid, CEO Durham Regional Hospital  
Jim Knight, CEO Duke Health Raleigh Hospital