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## Lexington conference focuses on hospital-acquired health conditions

### Ex-surgeon General among speakers

By Jim Warren  
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A health conference in Lexington on Friday will focus on the threats of hospital-acquired health conditions and efforts to prevent them.

Speakers will include leading health officials and researchers, plus former U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders and actress Alicia Cole, whose performing career was interrupted by an attack of necrotizing fasciitis, the so-called flesh-eating bacteria, which Cole contracted during a hospital stay.

The fourth annual Conference for Healthcare Transparency & Patient Advocacy will be 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday at Lexington's Embassy Suites. Sponsors include Health Watch USA, a Kentucky-based health advocacy group; Consumers Union; and the Pulaski County Medical Society. Registrations are still being accepted.

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh, conference coordinator, said all the meeting's speakers will talk on issues related to combating hospital-acquired infections, a growing health-care problem that has grabbed the national limelight.

Kavanagh, a Somerset physician, contends that concerns about such infections that were raised during the Healthcare Transparency and Patient Advocacy Conference in Lexington two years ago helped prompt the federal Medicaid officials to start withholding payments from hospitals in cases where Medicaid patients acquire infections.

"I really feel that initiative had its birth at our 2008 conference, and now it has become law," Kavanagh said. "These conferences really do make a difference."

Cole, who has had roles on shows such as *Silk Stalkings*, *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Veronica Mars*, checked into a California hospital in 2006 for a routine procedure. She developed a surgical-site infection, which quickly turned into necrotizing fasciitis. Cole survived after multiple surgeries and today is a leading advocate for preventing hospital infections.

Among other speakers, Dr. Richard Wild, chief medical officer with the Atlanta Regional Office of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, will discuss the use of financial incentives to raise health care quality. Jill Rosenthal, program director for the National Academy for State Health Policy, will review state Medicaid policies on hospital-acquired conditions. Jeannie Cimiotti, a nurse and researcher at the University of Pennsylvania, will discuss her research into how nurse-staffing levels affect patient outcomes.

Conference registration is \$50 and includes a box lunch. Continuing education credits are available. Call (606) 425-7278, or go to [Healthconference.org](http://Healthconference.org).

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