

Medical packaging can make the difference

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Practitioners prepare for an operating room simulation done for 15 packaging professionals during the School of Packaging's Packaging Immersion Experience pilot program held in October 2010 at MSU's Learning and Assessment Center. Courtesy photo

(Medical Xpress) -- At the site of a car crash, in an emergency room or at an operating table: The seconds it takes to get a medical device to work properly or to understand the packaging on a device can be a matter of life and death.

To bridge the gaps between the people packaging medical equipment and the [health care professionals](#) using it, Michigan State University's School of Packaging is teaming up with MSU's Learning and Assessment Center and a Grand Rapids firm to host the Healthcare Packaging Immersion Experience on Oct. 5 and 6.

Laura Bix, an associate professor in the School of Packaging, and Mary Kay Smith, director of the Learning Assessment Center, are working with Oliver-Tolas Healthcare Packaging, a Grand Rapids producer of sterile-grade [medical device](#) packaging for the event.

"Our goal is to provide a bridge between the people designing, manufacturing and packaging the devices and the real world," said Bix, whose work also is supported by MSU's AgBioResearch. "It's important to know how what you produce as a packaging engineer impacts outcomes in the emergency, operating room or ambulance.

"This unique education experience will show medical device manufacturers what aspects they must consider when designing devices and their packages."

The event takes place at the James B. Henry Center in East Lansing. Last year, the groups hosted [a pilot event with 25 packaging professionals from across the nation](#). This year's conference is expected to draw close to 100 professionals.

The event allows senior-level medical device packaging professionals to experience the real-world performance of medical packaging in simulated operating and emergency rooms. Participants also will discuss packaging challenges and possible solutions with nurses and doctors.

Smith of the Learning and Assessment Center - a joint venture of MSU's health colleges where students demonstrate competence in basic tasks and skills through in-depth, hands-on training - said having participants experience simulated procedures occurring in realistic contexts can be extremely important.

"Packaging engineers and manufacturers are, generally speaking, not physicians or technicians in these environments," she said. "Simulations

provide an opportunity to evaluate how devices work - and don't - in a safe environment. Ultimately, this can lead to better quality patient care."

MSU is the only university in the world to have colleges of Human Medicine, Nursing, Osteopathic Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and a School of Packaging, so it is logical the institution host an event like this, Bix said.

The featured speaker at the two-day event is Jim Bagian, a former NASA astronaut with more than 300 hours in space who also served as the chief patient safety officer and director of the Veteran Affairs National Center for Patient Safety. He also specializes in snow and ice rescue and has served as a member of the Denali Medical Research Project on Mount McKinley. He will discuss his experiences with packaging in extreme contexts of use and the consequences that poor design can have on medical care.

Other highlights include sessions involving hands-on simulations from emergency rooms and accident scenes, where audience members will witness how a specific situation can significantly impact a user's abilities.

In addition to MSU and Oliver-Tolas Healthcare [Packaging](#), the conference is sponsored by DuPont, Multivac, Glenroy Inc., Neenah Paper and Cardinal Health. For more information, go to www.msu.edu/~hcie.

Provided by Michigan State University

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