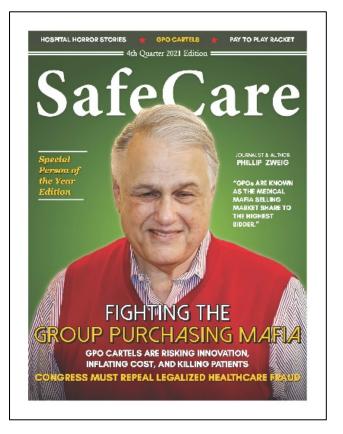# 2021 Healthcare's Person of the Year

Fighting the Group Purchasing Mafia

LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY, USA, Dec 6, 2021 /SafeCareMagazine.com/-- SafeCare magazine announced today release of its 2021 Person of the Year for Healthcare Edition. This edition offers an in-depth look at the anticompetitive business practices of Group Purchasing Organizations (GPOs) that control hospital buying in excess of $300 billion annually for drugs, devices and supplies. The edition also present hospital horror stories from 25 different hospitals.

"Group Purchasing Organizations are known as the medical mafia selling market share to the highest bidder. I compare GPOs to the fable of Billy Goat Gruff. Vendors have to pay the toll to the troll (GPOs) to cross the bridge and enter the marketplace,"

**Phillip L. Zweig,
Author and Journalist
2021 Person of the Year**

"Healthcare Group Purchasing Organizations are buying exclusivity at the risk of innovation, at the risk of cost, at the risk of patients' lives," stated Yisrael M. Safeek, MD, MBA, CEO of The SafeCare Group.

"We have a symbiosis of sleazy Group Purchasing Organizations sharks masquerading a step-above the law, touting "value" and "savings", while all the while contributing to the fleecing of America through an organized pay-to-play racket. Phil Zweig has spent a lifetime fighting this."

The narrative of our 2021 Person of the Year is a classic David vs. Goliath anecdote.

Phil Zweig is a story of campaigning to restore market competition and integrity to the healthcare supply chain by highlighting the kickbacks, rebates, bribes, and other abuses of group purchasing organizations (GPOs),

Well known for breaking the story on the reckless lending practices and wild antics of the Penn Square Bank in 1982 for which he received multiple awards in journalism and a Congressional citation, Zweig has spent most of the last decade taking on what he calls the "medical mafia."

Zweig stated, "It's hard to measure the impact of the GPO barrier in discouraging entrepreneurs and inventors to develop innovative medical technologies. It's allowed because the GPO/hospital lobby and their allies have bought and/or intimidated the United States Congress.

As executive director of Physicians Against Drug Shortages, Zweig is currently working with a grassroots coalition of physicians and other healthcare professionals to end the shortages by lobbying Congress to repeal the 1987 Medicare anti-kickback "safe harbor" provision. 1987 Congress awarded GPOs a "Get out of jail free card," which took the form of an amendment to the Social Security Act, exempting GPOs from criminal prosecution for taking kickbacks. In any other industry, people can and do go to jail for this.

This ill-considered statute exempted GPOs from criminal prosecution for taking vendor kickbacks and undermined competition in the generic drug/healthcare supplies industry.

Known GPO anticompetitive business practices include:
• Collecting excessively high contract administrative fees
• Sole-source contracting or contracting with only one vendor for a given product when multiple vendors of comparable products are available;
• Product bundling or linking price discounts to purchases of a specified group of products; and
• Limiting customer access to new and innovative technology.

Zweig told SafeCare magazine, "I compare GPOs to the fable of Billy Goat Gruff. Vendors have to pay the toll to the troll (GPOs) to cross the bridge and enter the marketplace."

About The SafeCare Group®
The SafeCare Group is focused on helping patients by extending our products across their healthcare journey - everything from finding a hospital, writing reviews, and staying connected afterwards. In 2019, The SafeCare Group launched RateAHospital.com to allow patients to share care experiences, and in 2013, the 100SafeCare Hospitals.com rankings were created to empower healthcare consumers. Since 2016, The SafeCare Group invested heavily into Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms known as Intelligent Healthcare™ PaaS by leveraging machine learning and deep-learning capabilities. SafeCare AI® Suite fosters a new generation of AI applications, which are able to sense, reason, act and adapt, to address a range of healthcare challenges in areas such readmissions, medical errors, infections, cost, and outpatient utilization. Since 2014, SafeCareSoft® SaaS solutions enable hospitals to take advantage of disruptive healthcare software known as Softwaring Healthcare Excellence® that optimize hospital ratings and regulatory accreditation. The SafeCare Group® was founded in 2010 and is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

For more information about The SafeCare Group, visit www.safecaregroup.com