HOSPITALS AND INSURERS FORM PENNSYLVANIA HEALTH CARE QUALITY ALLIANCE

Coalition Focuses on Transparency in Health Care and Improved Patient Care, Hires Executive Director

HARRISBURG, PA (January 11, 2007)— A group of Pennsylvania health care providers and insurers has formed a new organization, the Pennsylvania Health Care Quality Alliance, to foster transparency in health care and improve patient health. During the next year, the goals for the Alliance are to develop a consistent, uniform, statewide approach to measuring health care quality, and to report useful information to both providers and the public using measures that have already been developed and endorsed at a state or federal level, and leveraging existing data sources. The Alliance seeks to enable consumers and businesses in Pennsylvania to compare provider performance, help providers evaluate and improve the quality of their patient care, and enable insurers to evaluate the performance of their provider networks.

Alliance participants include the Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP), which represents more than 225 hospitals and health systems across the state, the Delaware Valley Healthcare Council, the Hospital Council of Western Pennsylvania, the state's four Blue plans (Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania, Capital BlueCross, Highmark Inc., and Independence Blue Cross), the Pennsylvania Medical Society, and representatives from the Governor's Office of Health Care Reform and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"We created the Alliance to identify a common way of understanding and interpreting data that in many instances are already reported or measured by providers and insurers today," said Gerald Miller, Alliance steering committee chair and former president and CEO of Crozer-Keystone Health System. "However, our current efforts are not optimally coordinated and focused. We believe the Alliance can help address this by building on existing efforts rather than replacing them. Pennsylvania has a long history of public reporting on hospital care and this is the next logical step in the process."

The Alliance intends to focus on measures that are evidence-based and actionable, using methods of measurement, data collection, and reporting that are statistically sound and not unreasonably burdensome for providers or insurers. The measures will be drawn from those already developed and endorsed by such groups as the Hospital Quality Alliance, the Ambulatory Quality Alliance, the National Quality Forum, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the Joint Commission, the National Committee for Quality Assurance, and specialty societies.

"The Pennsylvania Health Care Quality Alliance is a very welcome addition to our local and statewide efforts to improve the quality of patient care in an accountable manner," said Alliance steering committee member Loren Roth, MD, Senior Vice President, Quality Care and Chief Medical Officer of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

"We have very high expectations for the Alliance," said I. Steven Udvarhelyi, MD, Chief Medical Officer of Independence Blue Cross, and steering committee member of the A lliance. " All of the partners in the Alliance believe there is a real need to offer health care consumers consistent and meaningful information on the quality of their health care . W e expect the Alliance will help hospitals and health insurers implement programs that improve the quality of patient care."

"Physicians and the entire hospital community look forward to having a common, meaningful set of performance measures we can use to refine and optimize our ongoing efforts to evaluate and continually improve the quality of the care we provide," said Patrick (P.J.) Brennan, MD, Chief Medical Officer and Senior Vice President for the University of Pennsylvania Health System and Alliance steering committee member. "The Alliance will provide important ways for physicians, hospitals, insurers, businesses and consumers to gain insight into the quality and effectiveness of health care services."

In December, the Alliance hired Erik D. Muther to serve as its first executive director. Muther has more than 12 years experience working with health plans, hospitals, and other health care organizations, with special expertise in program management and development. Prior to joining the Alliance, he was a Senior Manager with Accenture, Ltd., a global consulting firm, and led a wide range of projects, including business capability development, operational improvement programs and new systems implementations. His previous experience includes exploring health care innovation opportunities, the development of partnerships, and the creation of new business units within existing companies.

"Our appointment of Erik Muther ensures that the Alliance's work can move forward efficiently and effectively, building on the physician-hospital-insurer partnership to improve patient care," said Miller.