

New Website Compiles PA Hospital Quality Data

Hospitals, Insurers, and Government Collaborate to Make Health Care Performance Information Easier for Patients to Access, Understand

(March 19, 2008 PHILADELPHIA, PA) A new website debuts today that for the first time compiles, from a variety of sources, outcome and quality data for all of Pennsylvania's acute care hospitals in a single location accessible by the general public and designed to help patients and consumers make more informed health care choices.

The site—www.phcqa.org—is the work of the Pennsylvania Health Care Quality Alliance, an association of the Commonwealth's hospitals, Blue Cross insurers, the Pennsylvania Medical Society, government policy makers, and other organizations concerned with promoting quality and transparency in health care.

“While hospital quality data has become more available on the Internet, consumers are at a disadvantage when they must search out multiple sites, each with its own measurement standards,” said Gerald Miller, chairman of the Alliance. “PHCQA has developed, and is continuing to refine, a consistent and uniform approach that makes it easier for consumers to access, understand, and use the data.”

“Our goal has been to work together on a common way of understanding and sharing the quality measures data that providers are already required to report in Pennsylvania,” noted Carolyn F. Scanlan, president and CEO of The Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania. “The PHCQA does not replace existing state and federal quality and safety data requirements, nor is it yet another reporting requirement for hospitals.”

The site is being launched with information gathered from the federal Medicare program (CMS), the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4), and the Joint Commission (the national body that accredits hospitals). Visitors to the site are able to search hospital quality measures in four major clinical areas:

- Heart attack,
- Heart failure,
- Pneumonia,
- Prevention of health care-associated infections.

These clinical areas represent some of the most common conditions treated in hospitals—and some of the most costly.

“These areas are just the beginning,” Mr. Miller emphasized. “We will add more clinical topics and quality measures as they are developed, and will continue to modify the site to make it as useful to consumers as possible. By sharing this data, we can provide objective quality information, while at the same encouraging best practices that improve the performance of hospitals statewide.”

The trend toward posting hospital quality data online is growing in response to concerns about the cost, quality, and effectiveness of care. “What differentiates PHCQA is the collaborative nature of its process. Hospitals, insurers, and regulators within Pennsylvania are united in a desire to improve quality, safety, and efficiency,” noted I. Steven Udvarhelyi, MD, Chief Medical Officer of Independence Blue Cross, and executive committee member of the Alliance.

“Pennsylvania’s physicians support the sharing of this information,” said Daniel Glunk, MD, president-elect of the Pennsylvania Medical Society, and an Alliance member. “Measuring outcomes and sharing results encourages improvement. While many factors influence where a patient goes for care, we want all citizens of the state and their caregivers to have access to information that can help them make better health care decisions.”

Officials with PHCQA noted that the website is a work in progress. “While the site is fully functional, we are calling it a beta site, because even as we introduce it today we are working to add additional quality reports and improve the site’s usefulness,” said Erik Muther, executive director of the Alliance. “We hope many people—both patients and providers—will visit the site, look at the quality reports, and give us their thoughts about how we can make them more useful.”

The Pennsylvania Health Care Quality Alliance formed in 2006. Alliance members 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 of HAP; 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.

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