

Pennsylvania's Hospitals Making Steady Progress In Quality; Statewide Patient Experience Mirrors National Averages

(July 22, 2009 HARRISBURG, PA) An analysis by the Pennsylvania Health Care Quality Alliance (PHCQA) shows that while clinical quality within Pennsylvania's hospitals is frequently above-average and steadily improving, patient's reported experiences with that care are not improving as rapidly, mirroring overall national averages.

PHCQA reviewed different measurements collected by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), covering data from July 2007 through June 2008. The CMS data looks at how hospitals performed in four major clinical areas: heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia, and the prevention of surgical infection. In addition, CMS collects data on 10 criteria to measure patient assessments of their hospital care. PHCQA compiles these measurements and others on its website, www.pahealthcarequality.org, which allows patients and consumers in Pennsylvania to see how their local hospital is doing in delivering care.

According to the PHCQA analysis, Pennsylvania hospitals collectively showed improvement in all of the CMS clinical measurements reviewed, and 60 percent of the state's hospitals scored higher than the national average in all clinical measures. Examples of the clinical measures include the percentage of patients provided with beta-blocker drugs after a heart attack; percentage of patients who had antibiotics appropriately administered before and after surgery; and the percentage of patients who were provided with a pneumonia vaccination if appropriate. The percentage of Pennsylvania's hospitals in the top tenth percentile nationwide increased for all but three measures, comparing 2006 – 07 data with 2007 – 08 data.

In the area of patient experience, overall performance for Pennsylvania's hospitals is tracking closely to—but not exceeding—national averages. Among the criteria used to determine patient assessments of their experiences are communication with doctors and hospital staff; how often patients' pain was well-controlled, hospital quietness and cleanliness, and overall rating and recommendation for the hospital.

As part of its analysis of the patient experience data, PHCQA conducted correlation studies of the data to see which measures had the biggest impact on the patient's overall feeling of satisfaction with his or her hospital stay. This analysis suggests that "good communication" with the nursing staff correlates strongly with high scores in other areas, such as pain relief, prompt attention, and overall recommendation of the hospital. The hypothesis is that when

patients feel that they have good communication with nursing staff, it improves the overall experience for the patient and leads to better overall satisfaction with the hospital stay.

“The take away from our analysis,” said Erik Muther, Executive Director of PHCQA, “is that Pennsylvania’s hospitals are among the top performers nationally when it comes to clinical quality. This is likely due not only to the professionals who care for us in these hospitals, but because Pennsylvania has been a leader in measuring and reporting on health care quality data. I am confident that over time, as hospitals focus more on patient experiences, those numbers will also begin to exceed national averages.”

Consumers and patients can learn more by visiting www.pahealthcarequality.org, the PHCQA website. The site provides extensive outcome and performance data on virtually every acute care hospital in Pennsylvania, and is designed to help the layperson understand how their local hospitals perform.

For more information regarding PHCQA’s analysis of CMS data, please contact Executive Director Erik Muther by phone at 215-241-3097 or via e-mail at erik.muther@phcqa.org.

About PHCQA

The Pennsylvania Health Care Quality Alliance is a voluntary group of health care organizations working together collaboratively to improve the quality of health care for the people of Pennsylvania. 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.

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