



## **On Average, Better than Average -- Pennsylvania's Hospitals Continue to Make Progress in Health Care Quality**

(September 2, 2010 HARRISBURG, PA) Pennsylvania's hospitals are frequently above-average when compared to national benchmarks of health care quality and are often making improvements at a faster rate than the rest of the country according to the "state of the state" analysis that the Pennsylvania Health Care Quality Alliance (PHCQA) recently conducted based on data collected by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Joint Commission. PHCQA reviewed data from July 2007 to June 2009 across four major clinical areas: heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia, and the prevention of surgical infections. The alliance also looked at data collected by CMS on 10 criteria to measure patients' assessments of their experiences of hospital care. PHCQA aggregates these measures, along with others, on its free public website, [www.pahealthcarequality.org](http://www.pahealthcarequality.org), where patients and consumers can check local hospital quality performance.

According to the PHCQA analysis, Pennsylvania hospitals showed improvement in 20 out of the 21 combined CMS and Joint Commission process measures. These indicators track how well a hospital performed on a checklist of best practices for delivering care. Examples of process measures include the percentage of patients given an aspirin following a heart attack; the 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. For 16 out of the 17 CMS process measures, Pennsylvania hospitals' average scores were at least as high, or higher, than U.S. averages. The number of Pennsylvania hospitals with average scores above the top tenth percentile nationally increased from 2008 to 2009. Pennsylvania hospitals also maintained quality gains. Pennsylvania averages that exceeded national averages in 2008 remained above national averages in 2009. The analysis of patient experience data showed gains in statewide scores, but some areas still have room for improvement. Patient experience assessments include questions related to doctor and nurse communication, hospital quietness and cleanliness, and the patient's overall rating and recommendation for the hospital. While average responses to all questions went up, more than half of the Pennsylvania hospitals scored above the national average for only a few questions. Correlation studies showed that good communication with nursing staff is associated with higher ratings of patients' overall experiences.

PHCQA also examined trends in CMS and Joint Commission indicators over a three-year period from 2006 to 2009. Most Pennsylvania hospitals' averages for process measures steadily increased. Some saw very dramatic improvements. For example, the percent of eligible heart attack patients who received angioplasty, also known as Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI), within 90 minutes of arrival at the hospital went from 57 percent to over 80 percent.

"Not only are we seeing significant improvements across Pennsylvania hospitals," explained Erik Muther, Executive Director of PHCQA, "we are also seeing a decrease in the gaps between



the highest and lowest performing institutions. I believe hospital efforts to implement evidence-based practices will ultimately translate into better outcomes and higher quality care for Pennsylvanians.”

For more information regarding PHCQA’s analysis, please contact Executive Director, Erik Muther by phone at 215-241-3097 or via email at [erik.muther@phcqa.org](mailto:erik.muther@phcqa.org). For detailed health care quality data, visit [www.pahealthcarequality.org](http://www.pahealthcarequality.org) for quality information on virtually every acute care hospital in Pennsylvania.

### **About PHCQA**

The Pennsylvania Health Care Quality Alliance is a nonprofit 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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