

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Patient Safety Awareness Week Tools and Tips

Celebrate by taking the “Patient Safety IQ Quiz”

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Ill. – March 9, 2010) The Joint Commission is marking National Patient Safety Awareness Week from March 7-13 by helping patients and their families become more involved and informed in their health care with a patient safety quiz.

This year, to promote patient safety The Joint Commission will give away 20 copies of “[You the Smart Patient](#),” and our new book “[The Smart Parent’s Guide to Getting Your Kids Through Checkups, Illnesses, and Accidents](#).” Both books are written for the general public in easy to understand language to help consumers become informed patients and patient advocates. All are welcome to participate in the book give-away by taking the online quiz to automatically be entered in the drawing. To participate go to www.jointcommission.org.

As the accreditor of more than 17,000 health care organizations in the U.S., The Joint Commission advocates for safe, high quality care. In addition to the book give-away, The Joint Commission’s complimentary award winning [Speak Up™ brochures](#) are available online. Topics include preventing infections, preventing medication mistakes, avoiding wrong site surgery, recovering after leaving the hospital, understanding medical tests, understanding what your caregiver says, preparing to become a living organ donor, and preventing errors in care; there is also a coloring book for children.

The brochures can be found at www.jointcommission.org. All of the Speak Up™ brochures are available in an easy-to-read format and are also available in Spanish.

The Speak Up™ campaign urges patients to:

Speak up if you have questions or concerns. If you still don't understand, ask again. It's your body and you have a right to know.

Pay attention to the care you get. Always make sure you're getting the right treatments and medications by the right health care professionals. Don't assume anything.

Educate yourself about your illness. Learn about the medical tests you get, and your treatment plan.

Ask a trusted family member or friend to be your advocate (advisor or supporter).

Know what medicines you take and why you take them. Medicine errors are the most common health care mistakes.

Use a hospital, clinic, surgery center, or other type of health care organization that has been carefully checked out. For example, The Joint Commission visits hospitals to see if they are meeting The Joint Commission's quality standards.

Participate in all decisions about your treatment. You are the center of the health care team.

The Joint Commission has been actively involved in patient safety for more than 50 years. At its core, accreditation is a risk reduction activity; compliance with Joint Commission standards is intended to reduce the risk of adverse outcomes. More than 75 percent of Joint Commission standards relate to patient safety. These national standards give organizations the framework to prevent health care-associated infections, safely manage medications, involve patients and their families in all care decisions, create a safe physical environment for care and provide competent caregivers.

Accredited organizations also must comply with the Universal Protocol and National Patient Safety Goals that establish safe practices for important aspects of the care process for common risks like effective communication, hand hygiene, accurate patient identification and medication safety, among others. In addition, The Joint Commission regularly issues national Alerts to warn health care organizations and

professionals about safety issues. Past issues have addressed hospital infections, medication errors, blood transfusion errors and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) accidents.

National Patient Safety Awareness Week is a national observance sponsored by the National Patient Safety Foundation as an education and awareness campaign to improve patient safety at the local level.

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Founded in 1951, The Joint Commission seeks to continuously improve health care for the public, in collaboration with other stakeholders, by evaluating health care organizations and inspiring them to excel in providing safe and effective care of the highest quality and value. The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits more than 17,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States, including more than 9,500 hospitals and home care organizations, and more than 6,300 other health care organizations that provide long term care, behavioral health care, laboratory and ambulatory care services. In addition, The Joint Commission also provides certification of more than 1,000 disease-specific care programs, primary stroke centers, and health care staffing services. An independent, not-for-profit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Learn more about The Joint Commission at www.jointcommission.org.