Joint Commission Annual Report Shows Big Improvements for Hospital Care

Quality performance linked to better patient outcomes

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Ill. – September 22, 2010) Accredited hospitals in the United States are providing higher-quality, evidence-based care for heart attack, pneumonia, surgical care and children’s asthma care, according to Improving America’s Hospitals: The Joint Commission’s Report on Quality and Safety 2010. The report presents scientific evidence of improvement and how it relates to these common medical conditions and procedures.

“It is very encouraging that this year’s report shows high rates of performance on these critical process measures and high levels of consistent excellence among hospitals on many measures,” said Mark R. Chassin, M.D., M.P.P., M.P.H., president, The Joint Commission. “Hospitals devote enormous resources and energy to using these performance measures to drive improvement in their clinical processes. This report demonstrates that these efforts are resulting in consistently improving patient care in America’s hospitals.”

The fifth annual report shows continual improvement over an eight-year period on accountability measures – quality measures that meet four criteria designed to identify measures that produce the greatest positive impact on patient outcomes. For example, the 2009 heart attack care result is 97.7 percent, up from 88.6 percent in 2002. A 97.7 percent score means that hospitals provided an evidence-based heart
attack treatment such as aspirin at arrival and beta-blockers at discharge 977 times for every 1,000 opportunities to do so.

The data, drawn from more than 3,000 accredited hospitals, show:

- Significant progress in consistently using evidence-based treatments. In 2002, hospitals achieved 81.8 percent composite performance on 957,000 opportunities to perform care processes related to accountability measures. In 2009, hospitals achieved 95.4 percent composite performance on 12.5 million opportunities – an improvement of 13.6 percentage points.
- Hospital performance on measures of quality relating to inpatient care for childhood asthma has increased dramatically in the two years since being introduced. The 2009 children’s asthma care result is 88.1 percent, up from 70.7 in 2007.
- The 2009 pneumonia care result is 92.9 percent, up from 72.4 percent in 2002 – an improvement of 20.5 percentage points.
- The surgical care result improved to 95.8 percent in 2009 from 77.4 percent in 2004.

Although hospitals achieved 90 percent or better performance on most individual process of care measures, the report contends that more improvement is needed. For example, hospitals finished 2009 with relatively low performance on the following two measures introduced in 2005:

- Providing fibrinolytic therapy within 30 minutes of arrival to heart attack patients – only 55.2 percent of hospitals achieved 90 percent compliance or better.
- Providing antibiotics to intensive care unit pneumonia patients within 24 hours of arrival – only 67.5 percent of hospitals achieved 90 percent compliance or better.

The report, which focuses on accountability measures for the first time, is an effort to clearly demonstrate the impact that performance measures have on improving patient outcomes. Doing so will strengthen the partnerships hospitals have with physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other clinicians who are engaged in the hard work of improving the processes of care. Specific expectations for performance on accountability measures will be included in hospital accreditation standards by 2012.

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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 18,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States, including more than 9,700 hospitals and home care organizations, and more than 6,800 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 1,700 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](http://www.jointcommission.org).