The Joint Commission today announced it is now offering a new Primary Care Medical Home (PCMH) certification option for accredited hospitals and critical access hospitals. Surveys for this add-on certification option can be conducted in coordination with the regular on-site accreditation survey or separately. Surveys are expected to begin this month and applications are now being accepted for this voluntary certification.

The PCMH certification option is designed for hospitals and critical access hospitals that have ambulatory care services that include the provision of primary care services offered by a primary care clinician. Patients benefit from this model because they have increased access to the services of the clinician and an interdisciplinary team; the care provided by other clinicians and facilities is tracked and coordinated; and evidence based treatment protocols guide their care. This model of care also focuses on increased education and self-management by the patient. The PCMH certification option will help support accredited organizations in their efforts to: provide their patients with timely and appropriate treatment, increase patient satisfaction, improve patient outcomes and reduce the overall costs to the health care system.

The PCMH requirements address operational characteristics related to patient-centered care, comprehensive care, coordinated care, access to care and a systems-based approach to quality and safety. Hospitals that seek the PCMH certification option must comply with existing accreditation requirements as well as additional PCMH-specific standards that address human resources, leadership, medication management, provision of care, performance improvement, record of care, and patient rights and responsibilities. Organizations that are interested in pursuing the new certification award must currently be accredited by or pursuing accreditation with The Joint Commission. Surveys for the PCMH certification option will add at least one additional day to the survey and will be a fee-based option.

This certification option complements hospital accreditation and is consistent with the new federal health care reform efforts to improve health outcomes and the coordination, quality and efficiency of health care services. It is designed to combine the improvements in quality of care and patient safety achieved through accreditation with
the opportunity for increased reimbursement from third party payers when the additional requirements of a PCMH are met and the certification is awarded.

“Primary care medical homes represent a new approach for hospitals to emphasize their commitment to patient-centered care. By focusing on teamwork, hospitals that achieve PCMH certification will have the framework in place that will assist them in their efforts to deliver the best care possible for their patients,” says Mark G. Pelletier, R.N., M.S., interim chief operating officer and director of accreditation and certification services, Division of Accreditation and Certification Operations, The Joint Commission.

The Joint Commission began offering the PCMH certification option to accredited ambulatory care organizations in 2011. The PCMH standards and survey process for both accredited ambulatory care organizations and hospitals were developed with input from an expert panel and comment was sought from ambulatory care and hospital providers on the standards. The Joint Commission model for PCMH is based on the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's definition of a medical home.

For more information about the Primary Care Medical Home certification option for hospitals, please visit The Joint Commission website or contact Sharon Hibbe, project manager-business intelligence, Division of Accreditation and Certification Operations, The Joint Commission, at 630.792.5817, or qualityhospitals@jointcommission.org.

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