The Joint Commission Releases New Speak Up™ Infographic on Anesthesia and Sedation Safety

(Oakbrook Terrace, Ill. – June 6, 2014) Nearly 40 million anesthetics are administered annually in the United States. To raise awareness of the risks of anesthesia or sedation and precautions that should be taken, The Joint Commission released a new Speak Up™ infographic today for patients and consumers titled “Speak Up: About Anesthesia and Sedation.” The publication was developed in collaboration with the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists and the American Society of Anesthesiologists®.

The infographic is targeted to a general audience and includes statistics, a description of types of anesthesia, information to tell your doctor, and precautions you should take before and after receiving anesthesia. The infographic is available as a free resource to patients, anesthesiologists, nurse anesthetists, physicians, surgeons, health care organizations, and anyone interested in promoting awareness about the safe administration of sedation and anesthesia. For the first time, the Speak Up program is releasing information in the form of an infographic that can be posted on a website or printed as an 11” x 17” poster.

“While anesthesia and sedation are safer today than they have ever been, some patients still experience harm or side effects,” says Ana Pujols McKee, M.D., executive vice president and chief medical officer, The Joint Commission. “Patients who are undergoing even common procedures, such as colonoscopy, can help prevent errors and avoid unpleasant side effects by talking with their anesthesia professional. The patient should ask about any concerns they have and they should also make sure the anesthesia professional is aware of their medical history.”

“The Joint Commission’s new infographic, ‘Speak Up about Anesthesia and Sedation,’ uses clear, concise descriptive language and images to inform patients and their families about
the anesthetic experience and reassure them about the safety of modern anesthesia for surgery and other procedures," said Dennis Bless, CRNA, MS, president, American Association of Nurse Anesthetists. “The AANA is proud to be part of this valuable public service initiative.”

“We’re very pleased to have worked with The Joint Commission on this valuable and important project," said Jane C. K. Fitch, M.D., president, American Society of Anesthesiology. “The anesthesiology medical specialty has been and continues to be the leading specialty addressing the issue of patient safety. It is the goal of every physician anesthesiologist to always deliver the safest medical care every patient deserves before, during and after surgery.”

Free downloadable files of Speak Up materials are available on The Joint Commission website. Speak Up brochures are available on the topics of depression, pain management, stroke, breastfeeding, dialysis patients who are hospitalized, diabetes patients who are hospitalized, visiting the doctor’s office, understanding medical tests, recovering after leaving the hospital, preventing medication mistakes, preventing infections, health literacy, preparing to become a living organ donor, avoiding mistakes in your surgery, preventing errors in care, and palliative care.

In addition to the brochures, there are also 11 animated Speak Up videos that cover a wide variety of topics to help empower patients, including pain management, medication safety, how to prevent falls, medical errors and stopping the spread of infection. The videos are intended as public service announcements. The series airs on The Joint Commission’s YouTube Channel as well as other venues. Some videos also are available in Spanish and Japanese.

The basic framework of the Speak Up initiative encourages 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 medicines 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.

Speak Up brochures and posters also are available for purchase in quantities through Joint Commission Resources at 877.223.6866 or online.

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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 accredits and certifies more than 20,500 health care organizations and programs in the United States, including hospitals and health care organizations that provide ambulatory and office-based surgery, behavioral health, home care, laboratory and nursing home 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. The Joint Commission has two nonprofit affiliate organizations: The Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare aims to solve health care’s most critical safety and quality problems and Joint Commission Resources (JCR) provides consulting services, educational services and publications. Joint Commission International, a division of JCR, accredits and certifies international health care organizations. Learn more about The Joint Commission at www.jointcommission.org.