NEWS RELEASE

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Dialysis: Five ways to be active in your care at the hospital
Joint Commission Launches Speak Up™ brochure on World Kidney Day

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Ill. – March 10, 2011) Dialysis patients who find themselves in the emergency department or admitted into the hospital are encouraged to play an active role in managing their care, according to The Joint Commission’s Speak Up™ educational campaign. The campaign is supported by the American Association of Kidney Patients, the National Kidney Foundation and the Renal Physicians Association. The Joint Commission is launching this campaign on World Kidney Day to highlight the importance of helping dialysis patients stay safe while they are hospitalized.

The Joint Commission’s new campaign “Dialysis: Five ways to be active in your care at the hospital” covers topics such as finding out how dialysis should be managed during hospitalization, avoiding infections in the hospital, asking about medications and possible interactions, talking with the hospital dietician, and planning for a return home. The campaign brochure provides helpful tips and encourages people requiring dialysis to ask a trusted family member or friend to be an advocate during any hospitalization. The campaign also encourages dialysis patients to share their dialysis care team contact information with the hospital staff upon entering the emergency department or being admitted.

“Dialysis patients are typically very involved in the daily care of their condition, but going to the hospital is a challenge because it is not part of their regular routine,” says Ana Pujols-McKee, M.D., executive vice president and chief medical officer, The Joint Commission. “Often, dialysis patients will assume that hospital staff have the knowledge and experience to appropriately manage their dialysis care and needs; that is not always the case. If you require dialysis, working closely with hospital caregivers and letting them know exactly what you need will ensure you get the best care.”
The Joint Commission’s new dialysis education campaign is part of the award-winning Speak Up program. To find out how to make the most out of a visit to the doctor, Speak Up brochures are available in English and Spanish at www.jointcommission.org. The Joint Commission’s award-winning Speak Up program urges people to take an active role in their own health care.

The basic framework of the Speak Up campaign urges patients to:

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

Pay attention to the care you are receiving. Make sure you're getting the right treatments and medications by the right health care professionals. Don't assume anything.

Educate yourself about your diagnosis, the medical tests you are undergoing, and your treatment plan.

Ask a trusted family member or friend to be your advocate.

Know what medications you take and why you take them. Medication errors are the most common health care errors.

Use a hospital, clinic, surgery center, or other type of health care organization that has undergone a rigorous on-site evaluation against established state-of-the-art quality and safety standards, such as that provided by The Joint Commission.

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

Speak Up brochures also are available on the topics of 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 and preventing errors in care. The brochures can be found at http://www.jointcommission.org/speakup.aspx. To sign up to receive future issues of Speak Up™, please go to http://www.jointcommission.org/thickbox/NewsletterSignUp.aspx?KeepThis=true&TB_iframe=true&height=480&width=640 to join the Speak Up™ E-alerts list.

**Statements from supporters of the Speak Up campaign**

“Patient education is vital and whenever there is an opportunity to arm patients with valuable information to help them live their best life possible, the American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP) will support those efforts. The American Association of Kidney Patients is happy to join with The Joint Commission and its efforts to increase patient safety in hospitals.”

**Karen Ryals, executive director, the American Association of Kidney Patients**
"The National Kidney Foundation believes that patients are the most important members of the health care team and when they feel empowered to speak up, they can guide decisions regarding their own treatment plan. We are pleased to partner on this important initiative that helps educate dialysis patients to actively participate in hospital admissions. There are over 300,000 patients in the U.S. treated with in-center hemodialysis, each with an average of two hospital admissions per year. These hospital stays present challenges regarding medication reconciliation, preservation of veins and dialysis access, application of the appropriate dialysis prescription, and dietary concerns. The admission may also allow potential opportunities to explore home dialysis or kidney transplantation as future options, if clinically appropriate."

Joseph Vassalotti, M.D., chief medical officer, National Kidney Foundation

“The more informed dialysis patients are about their care, the better their outcomes. It is essential for dialysis patients, their doctors and other providers to consider and accommodate their unique health care issues when they are admitted to the hospital setting.”

Ruben Velez, M.D., president, Renal Physicians Association

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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.