

Consumers and Purchasers Applaud HHS' *Partnership for Patients*

National Initiative Will Improve Hospital Care and Lower Costs

April 12, 2011

Today, in its continuing efforts to lower the enormous human and financial costs of health care events that jeopardize patient safety, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services rolled out [*Partnership for Patients*](#), a comprehensive hospital safety initiative focusing on reducing preventable hospital readmissions and health care-acquired conditions.

The *Partnership* will support hospitals across the country with tools and innovative strategies for reducing avoidable readmission rates, improving patient safety, and creating systems for sharing best practices among hospitals, with programs specifically designed to prevent harm and improve care transitions and care coordination. These tools will be customizable to meet the needs of local delivery settings and care providers.

“In today’s hospitals, millions of Americans find themselves vulnerable to conditions and situations – such as readmissions, infections, medical errors, and trauma – that are often serious, sometimes deadly, and mostly preventable,” said Debra L. Ness, president of the National Partnership for Women & Families and co-chair of the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project. “This is unacceptable. No one should leave a hospital sicker than when they were admitted. Consumers and purchasers stand with the Administration in its new initiative.”

Executive director for national health policy for the Pacific Business Group on Health and co-chair of the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project Bill Kramer added, “The *Partnership for Patients* will accelerate the benefits of important reform written into the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to consumers, patients, and their families. Hospitals now have an opportunity to take advantage of innovative tools to implement strategies that reduce avoidable hospital readmissions, and improve safety and patient outcomes. CPDP is committed to helping our members and our nation achieve the Initiative’s goals.”

In both human suffering and wasted financial resources, the costs of patient safety lapses are considerable, and unsustainable. Consider that:

- MedPAC estimates that re-admissions cost Medicare **\$15 billion** annually, and potentially **\$12 billion of those costs are preventable**. (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, 2008)
- Research shows readmission rates to be highly variable between hospitals, demonstrating that **hospitals have the means to achieve significant improvements in their avoidable readmission rates**. (Silow-Carroll, Edwards, and Lashbrook, 2011).
- Half of all patients re-hospitalized within 30 days had **no record of outpatient care** following the initial discharge. As late as three months after discharge, some 20 percent still had not been seen by a physician. (Jencks, et al, New England Journal of Medicine, April 2009).
- Approximately 100,000 patients die as the result of the nearly 2 million infections that occur each year in hospitals, at **an annual cost of \$45 billion**. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- On average, **1 in 3 patients admitted to the hospital experience a medical error or adverse event**. (Health Affairs, April 2011).

In 2014, the ACA mandates payment reductions from Medicare to hospitals with high rates of readmissions and health care-acquired conditions. The *Partnership for Patients* will help hospitals continue to receive standard reimbursement rates by giving them concrete ways to reduce these problems. In return, the Administration asks a wide range of stakeholders, including hospitals, clinicians, consumer and patient advocates, employers, unions, health plans and states, to pledge to specific efforts related to their particular role in the delivery, payment, and receipt of health care, that will serve to reduce preventable hospital-acquired conditions by 40 percent, and hospital readmissions by 20 percent, by 2013.

The Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project (CPDP) – a group of leading employer, consumer and labor organizations dedicated to improving the quality and affordability of health care – welcomes the move to ensure that implementation of the new health care law strengthens patient safety and results in greater value for every health care dollar. CPDP brings focus to the most important actions consumers and purchasers can take to make their voices heard by key decision-makers at local, state and national levels. CPDP also promotes the use of quality measurement – including measurement of hospital readmissions and HACs – to inform consumer and purchaser decision-making and affect payment policies. An important element of the *Partnership for Patients* is the emphasis on development of better quality and patient safety measures that will provide consumers and purchasers with the information they need to make the best decisions about where to go for care.

Finally, the *Partnership for Patients* reflects the Administration’s goal of partnering with the private sector to further drive improvements in health care safety, quality and value beyond the Medicare program. CPDP is a strong advocate of private sector payers and purchasers aligning their own models for hospital payments with public sector efforts to maximize the

impact of this initiative. "We commend HHS for calling attention to the critical issue of care coordination and patient safety through the *Partnership for Patients*," said Ness. "We look forward to working with the Administration by organizing consumers and purchasers around the Initiative's important goals."

The Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project is a broad coalition, dedicated to improving the quality and affordability of health care in America for consumers and health care purchasers. The project's mission is to put the patient in the driver's seat—to share useful information about provider performance so that patients can make informed choices and the health care system can better reward the best performing providers. The coalition is comprised of consumer organizations, leading national and local employers and labor organizations. The Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation along with support from participating organizations. For more information contact questions@healthcaredisclosure.org or visit our website at www.healthcaredisclosure.org.