CHA Seeks to Resolve CMS Data Validation Issues

Last week, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) provided validation reports to Connecticut hospitals that are intended to verify the accuracy of the hospital clinical performance data submitted to CMS for the National Voluntary Hospital Reporting Initiative.

The validation was based on CMS’ review of five randomly selected records each for the first and second calendar quarter of 2003, which were re-abstracted by CMS. In order for a hospital to “pass” the validation, the data elements abstracted by CMS had to match 80% of the data elements abstracted by the hospital.

CMS has reported that approximately 30% of hospitals throughout the nation “failed” the validation. However, in Connecticut, many of the failures resulted from a serious problem with CMS’ validation process, and are not the result of deficiencies in the data submission.

CMS had originally advised hospitals that validation would be based only on the data elements related to the 10 measures included in the National Voluntary Hospital Reporting Initiative. However, the CMS Clinical Data Abstraction Center (CDAC) abstracted several additional data elements that were not required for the reporting initiative. Many hospitals failed validation because CMS considered it to be a “mismatch” if the additional data elements were not submitted.

CHA immediately identified the problem with the validation process and notified the American Hospital Association (AHA), which contacted CMS.

CMS has since reported to AHA that it recognizes there are issues with the validation process and is working to address them. In the meantime, CHA is assisting member hospitals in filing appeals to overturn the false validation results.

CHA will continue to work with AHA, CMS, and Qualidigm to resolve this specific validation issue and to facilitate reliable state and federal hospital performance reporting initiatives.

If you have any questions, contact Carrie Brady at (203) 294-7317 or brady@chime.org or Julie Petrellis at (203) 294-7319 or petrellis@chime.org.

DPH Commissioner to Continue in Rell Administration

In her first full week in office, Governor M. Jodi Rell has asked Public Health Commissioner J. Robert Galvin, M.D., to continue in his position, and he has agreed to do so.

Governor Rell began meeting with state commissioners individually this week to consider the composition of her administration. The meetings marked the first round of interviews for Governor Rell, who, consistent with normal protocol for a change of Governor, last week asked about 60 commissioners, deputy commissioners,
and agency heads to submit “pro forma” letters of resignation, effective August 1, 2004.

After his interview with the Governor, Dr. Galvin told the media that they spoke about health matters facing the state, including Connecticut’s bioterrorism program. Dr. Galvin, a retired primary care physician from Glastonbury and a retired U.S. Army brigadier general, was appointed by former Governor John Rowland less than eight months ago.

CHA will continue to monitor and report on this process as the Governor meets with commissioners over the next few weeks.

**JCAHO Issues Report on Organ Donation**

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) has issued a call to action to eliminate the expanding gap between patients awaiting organ transplantation and the availability of organs to meet their needs.

The call to action is set forth in JCAHO’s latest public policy white paper, *Health Care at the Crossroads: Strategies for Narrowing the Organ Donation Gap and Protecting Patients*, which reports that more than 85,000 people in the United States now await life-saving transplants, and adds that current epidemics of morbid obesity, hypertension, and diabetes have the potential to drive the need for organs to still greater levels and make this an even more critical public health issue in coming years.

The report contains 33 specific recommendations and emphasizes the need to find alternatives to meet the growing demand for organs.

For a complete copy of the report, which is part of a continuing series of JCAHO white papers on key public policy issues that impact patient safety and healthcare quality, click [here](#).

**Red Cross Issues Emergency Appeal**

The Connecticut Blood Services Region of the American Red Cross has issued an emergency appeal for blood donations as the state’s blood supply drops to dangerously low levels.

An adequate blood supply is a three-day supply of all blood types, according to the Red Cross. However, the Red Cross in Connecticut has reported that it has less than an eight-hour supply of O-positive blood available. That translates into only 73 units of O-positive blood to serve all the state’s transfusing hospitals. The Red Cross reported that the O-negative blood supply was also at a critically low level, with only 25 units, or a nine-hour supply.

For seven of the eight blood types, the Red Cross reported that the levels are below a three-day supply and that the Connecticut Region has already begun implementing its emergency allocation procedures for blood types O-negative and O-positive, and may be forced to implement those procedures for certain other blood types, depending on the success of the emergency appeal.

To help raise awareness of this blood shortage, CHA will participate in a joint press conference with the Connecticut Blood Services Region at 10:00 a.m. Monday, July 12, 2004, at the American Red Cross Headquarters in Farmington.

The tentative agenda for the conference features Public Health Commissioner J. Robert Galvin, M.D., who will discuss the blood supply and its impact on public health; Red Cross Chief Medical Officer Ritchard Cable, M.D., who will present projections for the shortage; Brad Sherburne, M.D., Blood Bank Director of Connecticut Children’s Medical Center and Hartford Hospital, who will speak on the impact of blood shortages on hospital patients; and a testimonial from a Connecticut family about the need for blood.

CHA will also host a blood drive at its Wallingford offices from 10:15 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Monday, July 19, 2004. For more information on blood donation, call (800) GIVE LIFE or visit the Red Cross website.