



News Release

MEDICATION SAFETY SELF ASSESSMENT FOR HOSPITALS REPORTS IMPROVEMENT IN VIRTUALLY EVERY CATEGORY

January 31, 2005 Huntingdon Valley, PA – America’s hospitals are making important improvements in the crucial area of medication safety practices according to recently released data from a survey developed by the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP). Results from the ISMP’s 2004 Medication Safety Self Assessment® show significant advances in many safety practices, when compared to the initial assessment, which was completed in 2000.

The self assessments, conducted by ISMP in partnership with the Health Research and Educational Trust (HRET) and the American Hospital Association (AHA) through a grant by the Commonwealth Fund, allow U.S. hospitals to gauge their use of nearly 200 practices that most significantly influence safe medication use and compare their current systems and practices to similar hospitals nationwide. More than 1,600 hospitals participated in the 2004 assessment, many of which were able to chart their progress over the last four years by comparing results with their responses to the 2000 survey.

The largest changes in medication safety have occurred in the areas of *quality processes and risk management, drug order communication, staff education, and patient education.*

(more)

Quality Processes and Risk Management

Comparison of 2000 and 2004 data reveals a 43 percent increase in non-punitive, system-based approaches to error reduction, including providing positive incentives for error reporting and incorporating specific medication safety objectives in strategic plans. Preliminary data in this area also shows a 29 percent increase from 2000 scores in practitioners' ability to detect, report, and analyze errors, and in the use of redundancies and independent double-checks to detect and correct serious errors before they reach patients.

Methods of Communicating Drug Orders

Methods of communicating drug orders is another area of significant improvement when compared to the 2000 self assessment. The 2004 self assessment results show a 30 percent increase in implementation of standardized automated methods of communication, including linking computer systems with pharmacies, establishing lists of error-prone drug abbreviations, and following specific policies for verbal or telephone medication orders.

Patient Education

There was a 23 percent increase over the last five years in the category of patient education—patients being involved as active partners in their hospital care by being provided with information about their medications and ways to prevent errors. Hospitals indicated that more patients are being encouraged to ask questions about their medications and are being provided with written, up-to-date information about critical drugs prescribed at discharge.

Other Data Highlights

In addition, the self assessment revealed a 29 percent improvement from 2000 in efforts to minimize problems with look/sound-alike drugs. Survey items queried to what extent hospitals were regularly reviewing current medical literature to identify potential problems, implementing computer alerts for problematic drug names and using auxiliary warnings or other label enhancements.

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Preliminary comparative national data for the 2004 self assessment is now available to participating hospitals. Organizations that submitted data can access preliminary reports online through www.ismp.org with the same secure password they used during the submission process. An article with complete survey findings will be submitted for publication in 2005.

The Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP)

The Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization that works closely with healthcare practitioners and institutions, regulatory agencies, consumers, and professional organizations to provide education about medication errors and their prevention. ISMP represents nearly 30 years of experience in helping healthcare practitioners keep patients safe, and continues to lead efforts to improve the medication use process. For more information on ISMP, visit www.ismp.org.

Health Research and Educational Trust

Founded in 1944, the Health Research and Educational Trust (HRET) is a private, not-for-profit organization involved in research, education and demonstration programs addressing health management and policy issues. HRET, an American Hospital Association affiliate, collaborates with health care, government, academic, business and community organizations across the United States to conduct research and disseminate findings that shape the future of health care. Visit HRET's Web site at www.hret.org.

American Hospital Association

The AHA is a not-for-profit association of health care provider organizations that are committed to health improvement in their communities. The AHA is the national advocate for its members, which include almost 5,000 hospitals, health care systems, networks and other providers of care. Founded in 1898, AHA provides education for health care leaders and is a source of information on health care issues and trends. For more information, visit the AHA Web site at www.aha.org.

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