

Institute for Safe Medication Practices

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 29, 2005

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ISMP, Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health Help Small Rural Hospitals Reduce Errors

HUNTINGDON VALLEY, Pa.—Critical access hospitals--rural facilities with 25 beds or less--face unique challenges in implementing comprehensive medication safety programs. The Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) is working with the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health (PORH) on a project that will help 10 hospitals throughout the state meet those challenges and reduce the system-based causes of medication errors.

The 15-month joint project, called the Pennsylvania Critical Access Hospitals Medication Safety Collaborative, has three phases: 1) development of the collaborative and assessment of current practice; 2) defining outcome measures/quality monitoring indicators and recommendations for standardizing and improving error reporting; and 3) ongoing support and education for hospitals and collaborative data collection and reporting.

“Small rural hospitals often have difficulty finding adequate human, financial, and technological resources,” says Matt Fricker, MS, RPh, ISMP Program Director. “ISMP has error prevention strategies and resources for rural care providers that can help prevent these challenges from becoming barriers to medication safety.”

The project began with the Balanced Scorecard Performance Management Initiative being undertaken by the state’s critical access hospitals. As a result of the scorecard initiative, hospitals realized the need for consistent taxonomy when reporting errors and the power of collaborative efforts. ISMP has aggregated data submitted by collaborative members and used the data to work with those hospitals to enhance medication safety. The Institute has held workshops and teleconferences for participants, provided medication safety tools and resources, and is currently in the process of performing onsite consultations with each of the hospitals. According to Michelle Mandrack, RN, BSN, ISMP Medication Safety Specialist, “The critical access collaborative aims to promote process improvement across all participating hospitals, while at the same time supporting the individual safety and improvement needs of each facility.”

PORH views the project as a way for rural hospitals to more effectively use the data they collect to provide higher quality care. “This collaborative is moving patient safety forward in small communities,” says Lawrence Baronner, Critical Access Hospital Coordinator for PORH. “Partnering with ISMP is helping these hospitals implement high leverage strategies to prevent errors and improve their medication use systems.”

The project should be complete by January 2006. For more information, contact Renee Brehio at 704-321-3343 or rbrehio@ismp.org.

About 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, or its medication safety alert newsletters for healthcare professionals and consumers, visit www.ismp.org

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