

2008 PATIENT SAFETY GOALS ANNOUNCED

by Dave Gourley RRT



In late June, The Joint Commission announced the National Patient Safety Goals (NPSG) for 2008 applicable to all of the Commission's accreditation programs and Disease-Specific Care Certification Programs, such as Primary Stroke, COPD, and Lung Volume Reduction Surgery. This is the sixth annual issuance of the Patient Safety Goals. The majority of the goals are unchanged from 2007. The additions and changes to the NPSG are as follows (additions are underlined):

Goal 3 Improve the safety of using medications

Goal 3E Reduce the likelihood of patient harm associated with the use of anticoagulant therapy.

This new requirement addresses a significant patient safety issue. Anticoagulant therapy is a high risk treatment and does lead to adverse events. This NPS goal is applicable to hospitals, critical access hospitals, ambulatory care and office-based surgery settings, home care and long term care organizations.

Goal 7 Reduce the risk of health care-associated infections.

Goal 7A Comply with current World Health Organization Hand Hygiene Guidelines or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hand hygiene guidelines.

This NPS goal has been expanded to include use of the WHO Hand Hygiene Guidelines as an alternative to the CDC's hand hygiene guidelines. WHO has been playing a significant role in coordinating public health efforts and the World

Alliance for Patient Safety. There is an advanced draft of the WHO document, "WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care" available on their website, www.who.int/patientsafety/events/05/HH_en.pdf. Their tagline is "Clean Hands are Safer Hands". The addition to this established requirement is applicable for all accreditation programs.

Goal 16 Improve recognition and response to changes in a patient's condition.

Goal 16A The organization selects a suitable method that enables health care staff members to directly request additional assistance from a specially trained individual(s) when the patient's condition appears to be worsening.

This new Goal and Requirement regarding the deteriorating patient requires that hospitals develop a process for caregivers to obtain assistance from specially-trained individuals if and when a patient's condition worsens. This goal directly addresses the issue that many hospitals have already identified and corrected with the implementation of Rapid Response Teams (RRT). The RRT was one of six initiatives in the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's 100 K Lives Campaign. This new goal is applicable to all hospitals.

An existing hospital and home care requirement to assure the timely reporting of critical test results has been extended to the long term care program. Also, the requirement to limit and standardize drug concentrations (part of the goal to improve the safety of using medications) is being "retired" as an NPSG. This requirement will still be evaluated under the Medication Management standards, but will not be included as an NPSG.

Different than in past years, the 2008 NPSG will have a one-year phase-in period. This includes defined expectations (milestones) for planning, development, and testing at three, six, and nine months in 2008. Full implementation is expected in January 2009. Dennis S. O'Leary, M.D., president of The Joint Commission stated in the press release, "The 2008 National Patient Safety Goals seek to focus the efforts of health care organizations on the priority areas where the opportunities for improving patient safety are greatest. Consistently putting these requirements into action will benefit millions of patients."

The Joint Commission's Sentinel Event Advisory Group is a multidisciplinary panel of experts in patient safety, who are responsible for the development and annual updating of the National Patient Safety Goals and Requirements. Each year, this group works with The Joint Commission to perform a review of the literature and available databases to identify new goals and requirements. After receiving input from practitioners, healthcare organizations, payors, consumer groups, and other interested persons, the Advisory Group determines the highest priority goals and requirements. The Advisory Group then makes its recommendations to The Joint Commission.

For further information and/or the full text of the new 2008 NPS goals, you should visit The Joint Commission website at www.JointCommission.org.

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