



## New CMS Consumer Site Prompts Patient Satisfaction Assessment

Patient satisfaction rates, including perceptions of physician care, will now be publicly reported on the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) web site ([www.cms.hhs.gov](http://www.cms.hhs.gov)) beginning December 2007. The first report will reflect patient survey data from October 2006 through June 2007. Although participation in the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Health Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey is voluntary, future ties to CMS Pay for Performance are expected. For Network physicians, the new reporting system offers opportunities to assess and enhance patient perceptions of the clinical exchange.

Physician-focused survey questions will measure how well a physician's actions meet the patient's expectations of what the physician should do in the realm of social relations and communication about the treatment process.

### Opportunity for Improvement

The most recent patient satisfaction data using HCAHPS criteria rate Network physicians and their New Jersey peers similarly (see chart below): 83% of Network hospital patients indicated their physician treated them with courtesy/respect versus 84% statewide; 74% of patients said their Network physician listened carefully, as compared with 75% statewide, and 72% of Network patients said their doctor offered understandable explanations, versus 71% statewide. Both Network and non-Network NJ physicians scored lower than their national counterparts, who received responses of 86% (courtesy/respect), 77% (listens carefully) and 73% (understand explanation).

With another quarter of data collection to go before public reports are published, physicians can improve patient satisfaction scores by adopting and/or enhancing specific communication and listening approaches which have been shown to improve patient satisfaction, including:

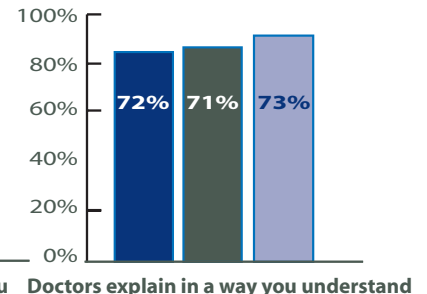
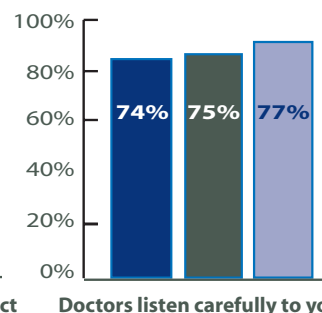
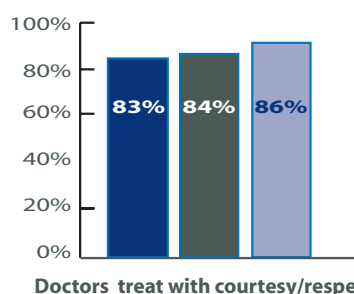
- Greeting the patient and their family; indicating openness by making eye contact and sitting at the bedside
- Using active listening techniques such as allowing the patient to tell their story without interruption (Press Ganey studies show that the average physician listening time is 20 seconds)
- Introducing oneself and giving the patient some information about your experience (i.e., I have been with the hospital for 20 years, etc.) to distinguish yourself and put the patient at ease
- Displaying courtesy such as knocking before entering, protecting the patient's modesty and being aware of facial expressions and non-verbal communication
- Giving patients honest time frames for procedures and keeping them informed of delays
- Using easily understood and appropriate language, avoiding technical or professional jargon
- Asking if all of their questions have been answered and encouraging the patient to write down questions on a notepad ahead of time
- Thanking patients for the opportunity to treat them

In addition to boosting satisfaction rates, some reports indicate that enhancing listening and communication skills do not add to time spent with patients, and may reduce follow-up telephone calls.

Contact the Patient Satisfaction Department for your hospital-specific scores and for additional tips to improve patients' perception of their care.

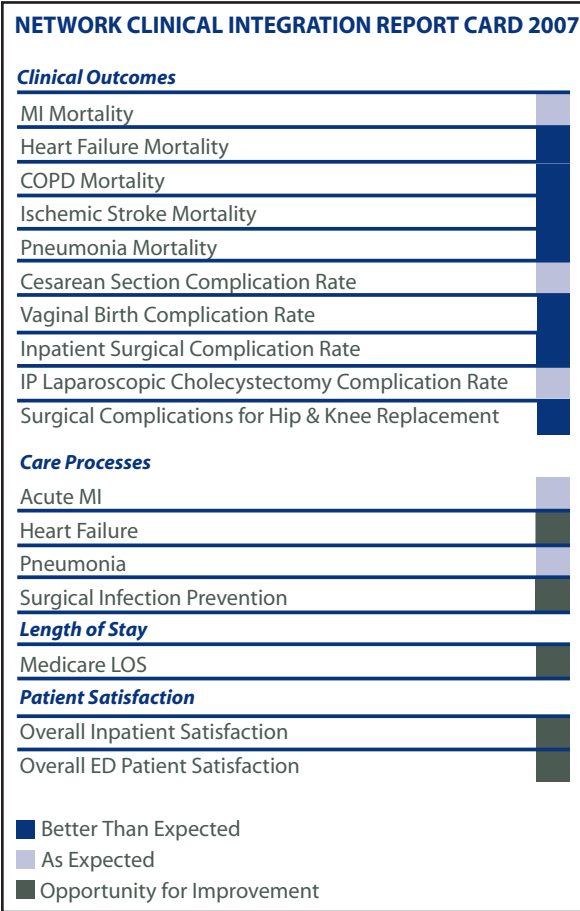
### Doctor Questions Percent of "always" responses

10/06 to 3/07



## A Network Priority: Focus on Improvements in Clinical Topics

The RWJ Health Network hospital Chief Executive Officers have asked the Chief Medical Officers, members of the Physician Coordinating Council (PCC), to prioritize the Network's report card items and target several for performance improvement. The report card captures the following elements of the Network's Clinical



Integration Program:

- Patient satisfaction
- Outcomes of care (mortality, complications, procedure rates)
- Care processes: Evidence-based practices measured by the Joint Commission
- Medicare Length of Stay

Performance targets are set by the PCC and are based on achieving statistically significant performance at the 95th percentile confidence level for outcomes, a 90% score for care processes and patient satisfaction, and the Medicare arithmetic mean length of stay statistic (a national benchmark) for length of stay.

Hospitals are working individually on these initiatives every day; however, the benefits of working collectively to

identify key problem areas, discussing new approaches and defining best practices yielded positive results in the past. The PCC will work together to focus on the priority topics and concentrate on improving results for those measures. Together with the Nurse Coordinating Council, the Network's Chief Nursing Officers who are responsible for improvements in patient satisfaction, the PCC will monitor hospital results on a quarterly basis and report findings to the CEOs and Networkwide.

## Network Rolls Out Risk Retention Plan

The RWJ Health Network has launched a new risk retention program designed to tackle the problem of spiraling malpractice fees through a physician-hospital joint defense approach. Opened to the Network hospitals in the Captive Insurance Company – CentraState Medical Center and RWJUH Hamilton -- the program takes aim at malpractice rates, which have increased steadily by an estimated 50% (ranging from 37% to 79% depending on specialty) over the past five years. A joint defense approach in which legal counsel is chosen from a panel of lawyers mutually agreed upon by physicians and hospitals as the Captive is formed, helps lower costs arising from hospital-related suits by reducing redundancies. For additional information, physicians should contact hospital administration.

## RWJ Health Network Updates

- *RWJUH Hamilton opened its new Lakefront Tower April 1. The four-story facility features 64 private patient rooms and incorporates elements of nature, noise reduction and ergonomics to enhance physician-to-patient interaction and promote healing.*
- *Ellen Guarnieri became CEO at RWJUH Hamilton January 1, having served as the hospital's VP for New Business Development and Executive VP; the hospital also named Francisco Javier Villota, MD, as VP of Medical Affairs and Paul Perrice, CPA, as SVP and Chief Financial Officer.*
- *The Cancer Institute of New Jersey appointed Joseph R. Bertino, MD, as Interim Director, replacing William N. Hait, MD, who is leaving for a position in private industry.*
- *Children's Specialized Hospital has opened a Neurorehabilitation and Brain Injury Program in New Brunswick, offering diagnostic, assessment and treatment services for children with special needs and learning and other disabilities. Contact Crystal Farre, MSSW, LSW at 732-342-8512 or Simeon Mertyl at 732-342-8510 for referral information.*
- *RWJUH at Rahway has opened its Fitness and Wellness Center in Scotch Plains. The 55,000 square foot site merges clinical and rehabilitation services with community education and personal wellness programs.*

The Physician Coordinating Council is comprised of the medical leadership of the Robert Wood Johnson Health Network members which include:

- Bayshore Community Health Services, Inc.
- Carrier Clinic
- CentraState Healthcare System
- Children's Specialized Hospital
- Raritan Bay Medical Center (Perth Amboy and Old Bridge)
- Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (New Brunswick, Hamilton, and Rahway)
- UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (New Brunswick)
- Eric B. Chandler Health Center
- Henry J. Austin Health Center
- Plainfield Health Center
- VNA Community Health Center
- Presbyterian Homes & Services, Inc.

It is the only health care network in New Jersey to include a medical school among its partners.

Please direct questions about any information contained in PCC Pulse to your chief medical officer or the Network's Director, Clinical Integration [lois.dorman@rwjuh.edu](mailto:lois.dorman@rwjuh.edu).

Affiliated Physicians Health Plan offers health benefits to physicians, their staff and families. For information call (888) 670-8135 and access option #5.

The Robert Wood Johnson Health Network operates a quality physician billing service at competitive rates. Call 732-418-8055 for more information.