



April 19, 2005

Dear Participants,

Rural communities have often been relegated to the margins of the health care quality movement. A common perception, among health care professionals and the public alike, has been that rural hospitals just do not have the staff, resources, or technology to compete with the “big boys.” As a result, rural hospitals frequently suffer a “bypass” problem, in which potential patients from their own service areas opt to go to larger, urban hospitals in the pursuit of quality health care. Until recently, there has been no objective information with which to counteract this perception.

The Rural Hospital Award Program (RHAP), announced last year by Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG), uses publicly reported Medicare data for established health care quality measures to recognize those hospitals that provide care that is equal to or better than their urban counterparts. It is our hope that the RHAP will help motivate rural hospitals to continue their quality improvement efforts and, in the process, improve the public’s perception of rural hospital quality.

The RHAP is a project that was conceived and championed by Carter Marshall, MD, MPH, who, until he passed away in February, was HSAG’s Vice President of Clinical Quality Assessment. We also honor his memory and life-long commitment to health care quality today as we give the **Carter L. Marshall, MD, MPH, 2005 Rural Hospital Quality Award** to three rural hospitals that provide outstanding care to their communities.

In partnership with the Rural Health Office and the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association, HSAG welcomes you to the very first RHAP awards presentation. Enjoy today’s program, congratulate the winners, and celebrate health care quality success in the rural hospital setting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Herb Rigberg", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Herb Rigberg, MD
Chief Executive Officer
Health Services Advisory Group