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Press Release

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HSAG Announces Rural Hospital Award Program

PHOENIX, ARIZONA—Health Services Advisory Group Inc. (HSAG), Medicare’s Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) in Arizona, will begin giving quality improvement awards to deserving rural Arizona hospitals in 2005. The Rural Hospital Award Program (RHAP) will recognize excellence in the clinical management of pneumonia among rural hospitals. Award criteria will be based on hospital results for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) pneumonia quality measures.

The RHAP has three objectives:

- To stimulate quality improvement efforts and encourage cooperation and collaboration among rural hospitals. Performance feedback and recognition will motivate hospitals to continuously improve the quality of the health care they provide. RHAP activities will foster the sharing of successful quality improvement strategies.
- To assist rural hospitals in coping with the “bypass” problem, which occurs when potential patients bypass the local hospital in favor of larger institutions. It is anticipated that patients will give stronger consideration to their local hospital if that hospital is publicly recognized for providing high-quality care.
- To achieve these objectives without adding to the workload of rural hospitals. The award criteria are based on data that hospitals are already collecting and submitting to CMS; participating in the RHAP does not require hospitals to expend any additional financial or administrative resources.

The RHAP awards banquet will be held on April 19, 2005. Guests will include the award recipients, rural hospital administrators, and representatives of the media, the Governor’s office, the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association, and other state agencies. The banquet will feature a nationally known hospital quality improvement speaker and a panel discussion of issues common to rural hospitals. The panel will be comprised of RHAP award recipients.

To be eligible for the RHAP, hospitals must:

- Demonstrate ongoing data collection and participation with the Hospital Quality Alliance (HQA).
- Meet geographical criteria for classification as a rural hospital.
- Achieve results on the eight pneumonia quality measures that rank the hospital among the top performers in Arizona, regardless of size or location.

The eight CMS pneumonia quality measures used as the basis for RHAP evaluation and awards are:

- Oxygenation assessment within 24 hours of hospital arrival
- Pneumococcal immunization
- Blood culture performed within 24 hours prior to or after hospital arrival
- Blood cultures performed before first antibiotic received in the hospital
- Adult smoking cessation advice/counseling
- Initial antibiotic received within four hours of hospital arrival
- Administration of antibiotics consistent with current guidelines
- Influenza immunization

Additional information regarding the CMS pneumonia quality measures is available at:
<http://www.medqic.org/content/nationalpriorities/topics/projectdes.jsp?topicID=445>

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About Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG)

For over 25 years, HSAG has provided innovative leadership on health care quality improvement projects for federal, state, and private sector clients. Founded by a group of medical professionals in 1979, HSAG is one of most experienced quality improvement organizations in the nation. HSAG is recognized as an agent of change in the health care industry because of the company's successful collaboration with providers across the continuum of care. For more information about HSAG, go to www.hsag.com.

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