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SHM's Project BOOST Aimed to Reduce Costly Hospital Readmissions

(PHILADELPHIA – April 1, 2009) – A study released in today's *New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM) found that one in five Medicare beneficiaries discharged from the hospital are readmitted within 30 days and result in potentially \$17.4 billion in excess Medicare costs.* Two of the authors are actively involved in the Society of Hospital Medicine's (SHM) Project BOOST, a program aimed at reducing hospital readmissions.

Project BOOST (**B**etter **O**utcomes for **O**lder adults through **S**afe **T**ransitions) is a comprehensive program that aims to significantly reduce hospital readmissions by optimizing care transitions from the hospital to home, while improving communication among health care providers.

Supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation, SHM's Project BOOST utilizes a team approach to assess patients' risk for re-hospitalization, and plans and executes risk-specific discharge planning activities.

Project BOOST is led by co-author of the NEJM study, Mark V. Williams, MD, as its principal investigator, and guided by an Advisory Board chaired by NEJM study co-author Eric Coleman, MD, MPH. The national advisory board includes recognized leaders in hospital medicine, care transitions, payers and regulatory agencies. Representatives from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), The Joint Commission, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and Blue Cross and Blue Shield also participate. Last month, Project BOOST expanded from six pilot sites to a nationwide implementation in 24 institutions.

"Reducing unnecessary readmissions is one of the keys to reducing cost, increasing efficiency and reforming the healthcare system," said Larry Wellikson, MD, SHM's CEO. "I'm proud to say that SHM's Project BOOST is making a significant difference to reduce preventable readmissions. Now, across the country, Project BOOST provides all the tools needed to effectively reduce these readmissions and ensure a safe transition from hospital to home."

A study released on March 12, 2009, also from NEJM, found that in 2006, hospitalists cared for 61 percent of Medicare patients, an increase from 46.4 percent in 1995.

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“With 28,000 hospitalists practicing in four out of five of the nation’s hospitals, hospitalists are on the cutting edge of reducing readmissions,” said Mark V. Williams, MD, Professor & Chief of the Division of Hospital Medicine at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University. “Project BOOST is already a real-world resource for all health care delivery teams looking to improve the quality of their discharge process and reduce preventable and costly post-discharge complications.”

Currently, Project BOOST has enrolled 30 institutions from across the nation. Each site participated in a 2 day training session and receives a year of mentoring from Project BOOST investigators. In addition to the mentoring, they will receive the BOOST toolkit and evaluation tools, courtesy of The John A Hartford Foundation and SHM.

In addition to Project BOOST, SHM has also signed on as a supporter of Senator Jeff Bingaman’s Medicare Quality and Payment Reform Act of 2009, S. 295. This bill would make important changes to the Medicare program designed to improve readmission rates and align financial incentives, leading to higher quality, more efficient care.

For more information on Project BOOST, or to download the BOOST toolkit, visit SHM’s BOOST Resource Room at www.hospitalmedicine.org/BOOST or email boost@hospitalmedicine.org.

* Jencks SF, Williams MV, Coleman EA. Rehospitalizations Among Patients in the Fee-for-Service Medicare Program. N Engl J Med 2009;360(14): 1418-28.

ABOUT SHM

SHM is the premier medical society representing hospitalists. Over the past decade, studies have shown that hospitalists decrease patient lengths of stay, reduce hospital costs and readmission rates, all while increasing patient satisfaction. Hospital medicine is the fastest-growing specialty in modern healthcare, with over 28,000 hospitalists currently practicing and an upward growth trajectory in full force. For more information about SHM, visit www.hospitalmedicine.org.

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