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SHM Joins Forces with Five Medical Societies to Improve Care Transitions

(PHILADELPHIA – April 18, 2009) – The Society of Hospital Medicine (SHM) and five other professional medical societies have developed a set of consensus standards to reduce hospital readmissions and address the quality in transitions of care between inpatient and outpatient settings.

The standards are being co-published by the *Journal of Hospital Medicine* and the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*.

Hospital readmissions are a critical issue in American healthcare today. New research in the April 2009 *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)* revealed that one out of five Medicare patients are readmitted to the hospital within 30 days of discharge. Earlier in 2009, SHM announced the national implementation of Project BOOST, a program designed to help hospitals decrease the number of readmissions. Coauthors on the research published in *NEJM* included the principal investigator on Project BOOST (Mark V. Williams, MD, FHM) and Chair of Project BOOST's Advisory Board (Eric A. Coleman, MD, MPH).

SHM, along with the American College of Physicians (ACP), the Society of General Internal Medicine (SGIM), the American Geriatrics Society (AGS), the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), and the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine (SAEM), developed a list of guiding principles that were used to develop a set of preferred standards for care transitions. These principles are:

- Accountability
- Communication
- Timely interchange of information
- Involvement of the patient and family members
- Respecting the hub of coordination of care
- Patients and families/caregivers will be able to identify the medical home or coordinating clinician
- At every point of transition, patients and families/caregivers need to know who is responsible for their care, who to contact, and how
- National standards for transitions of care should be established and implemented at the national and community level through medical societies, institutions, etc.
- Standardized metrics related to the care standards should be used to lead continuous quality improvement and accountability

Using these principles as framework, the group developed a list of standards describing necessary components for implementation, such as coordinating clinicians, care plans/transition records, communication infrastructure, standard communication formats, and transitions responsibility.

Many of the standards and principles are already part of SHM's Project BOOST (**B**etter **O**utcomes for **O**lder adults through **S**afe **T**ransitions), 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. To date, it has been implemented in 30 institutions across the country.

"Transitions of care and reducing readmissions are a key part of quality improvement in hospitals. They are at the top of SHM's agenda," said Larry Wellikson, MD, FHM, SHM's CEO. "SHM is actively mentoring 30 sites implementing the Project BOOST program and we're thrilled to publicly join forces with other leaders in healthcare to develop standards that will significantly improve the current care transitions process and help Americans lead healthier lives."

More information about SHM's Project BOOST can be found online at www.hospitalmedicine.org/BOOST.

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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