

A look at The Joint Commission

## **Joint Commission designated to improve safety of office-based surgery**

New York has long been at the forefront of state patient safety initiatives. Since 1998, the state has mandated the reporting of adverse events, and in 2001, it introduced a protocol aimed at the prevention of wrong site, wrong patient, wrong side, and wrong invasive procedure events.

Now, a new patient safety law in New York requires physician practices that perform office-based surgical procedures to attain accreditation.

The accreditation requirement is part of 2007 legislation designed to protect the thousands of patients who undergo surgery in physician offices each year in New York. One of the primary components of the law is that office-based operations must be performed by physicians in a setting that achieves and maintains accreditation from a nationally recognized accrediting organization, such as The Joint Commission, as determined by the New York State Health Commissioner.

The need for strengthened quality oversight for office-based surgery has grown as the number of increasingly complex surgical and invasive procedures performed in doctors' offices has more than doubled in the last decade, with nearly 10 million surgi-

cal procedures performed annually in office-based settings nationwide since 2000.

New York State office-based surgery practices that are not already accredited by The Joint Commission or the two other approved accrediting agencies must become accredited on or before July 14, 2009. This new law reflects a national trend of state health departments and boards of medicine strengthening their oversight of quality efforts.

The Joint Commission began accrediting office-based surgery practices in 2001. The Joint Commission's office-based surgery standards emphasize attention to those issues that most directly affect patients and cover essential areas such as patient care, patient safety, staffing, customer service, improvement in care, and responsible leadership.

As a national evaluator of the safety and quality of care provided by health care organizations, The Joint Commission has more than 30 years of experience in promoting safe, high-quality care for patients at more than 50 types of ambulatory care settings. The office-based surgery standards were established specifically for physicians offering surgical or invasive procedures in an appropri-

ate physician-based setting. Many different types of office practices that are eligible for accreditation and are affected by this new law, including endoscopy suites and plastic surgery and urology practices.

Ambulatory care organizations and office-based surgery practices can often reap the benefits of Joint Commission accreditation, such as strengthening community confidence in the safety and quality of care, strengthening patient safety efforts, and enhancing business operations.

Currently, 25 states recognize Joint Commission accreditation for ambulatory care settings—in whole or in part—in fulfillment of regulatory requirements, and 14 states recognize Joint Commission accreditation for office-based surgery.