The Joint Commission Announces 2014 National Patient Safety Goal

In June 2013, The Joint Commission approved new National Patient Safety Goal NPSG.06.01.01 on clinical alarm safety for hospitals and critical access hospitals. The box on page 3 displays the new goal and its four elements of performance (EPs). The implementation for NPSG.06.01.01 will occur in two phases:

- In Phase I (beginning January 2014), hospitals will be required to establish alarms as an organization priority and identify the most important alarms to manage based on their own internal situations.
- In Phase II (beginning January 2016), hospitals will be expected to develop and implement specific components of policies and procedures. Education of those in the organization about alarm system management will also be required in January 2016.

The Joint Commission plans to publish the Phase I and II requirements at the same time to provide the field with complete information about the ultimate requirements of NPSG.06.01.01. However, due to changes that could arise from newly emerging evidence about best practices, the field’s experience with Phase I requirements, and other developmental work, the Phase II requirements may be enhanced before they are implemented. Any changes to Phase II requirements will be communicated to the field through Joint Commission channels such as field reviews, Perspectives, Joint Commission Online, and the Joint Commission Connect™ extranet.

In their review of the National Patient Safety Goal, Joint Commission advisory committee members noted that the goal helps focus the field’s attention on the safety issue and solutions will be evolving over many years. In fact, The Joint Commission is aware of efforts currently underway that will

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support the field in implementing the second phase of the goal's requirements. For example, the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation's (AAMI) Healthcare Technology Safety Institute (HTSI) is engaged in several activities intended to promote safe alarm system management, including the following:

- Conducting a survey of hospital practices in setting alarm parameters, followed by a study of alarm parameters
- Posting literature (reviewed in advance by a work group)
on best practices on alarm system management on the HTSI website at http://www.aami.org/htsi/alarms/library.html

- Offering webinars on safe alarm management

ECRI Institute also offers information (such as articles, policies, and webinars) on safely managing alarm systems at http://www.ecri.org/Forms/Pages/Alarm_Safety_Resource.aspx. In addition, The Joint Commission published Sentinel Event Alert Issue 50 on alarm management in April 2013 (see May 2013 Perspectives, page 1). The Alert, which contains suggestions for the field on assessing and managing risks associated with alarms, complements the expectations of the new National Patient Safety Goal on alarm management.

The new goal will appear in the 2013 Update 2 to the Comprehensive Accreditation Manual for the hospital and critical access hospital programs as well as their fall 2013 E-dition® updates.

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