

Ambulatory Health Care Surveyor Spotlight



Q&A with Susan Annicelli, RN, MS, MSN

Susan has 40 years of experience working in the health care field. After a successful 30-year career in the U.S. Army Medical Department serving in progressive assignments in critical care, anesthesia nursing, graduate level education, and executive leadership positions including command of two military health care networks, she joined The Joint Commission in 2013.

Susan feels the diverse roles she had in the military helped to make the transition to a Joint Commission surveyor smooth and effective. The opportunity to practice in austere deployed medical environments, ambulatory health centers, and tertiary teaching hospitals has surely contributed to her success as a Joint Commission surveyor!

Q: Tell the readers about your role as a Joint Commission ambulatory health care surveyor.

A: I have been a Joint Commission surveyor since mid-year of 2013. I currently work half-time, which means that I conduct 50 – 70 ambulatory surgical center (ASC) surveys per year.

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Q: What made you decide to become a Joint Commission surveyor?

A: It was a seamless transition from practitioner to the role of surveyor. I have always had a passion for health care and its challenges. The Joint Commission provided the perfect platform for me to continue to learn and to contribute to diverse health care environments.



Q. What do you like most about working for The Joint Commission?

A: I truly enjoy demonstrating the collaborative aspect of our surveys and experiencing how staff at organizations react when they realize that we are partners rather than adversaries. It is a privilege and pleasure to join an organization’s survey team to help educate, encourage, and inspire quality.



Q. Do you think that The Joint Commission survey process has evolved over the years?

A: Definitely! Today’s survey process is a true example of a collaborative partnership. As a young nurse, I experienced a very different process in terms of the tone, tempo, and approach. I remember surveys as stressful, intense, and as no-fail inspections. The focus of the Joint Commission survey process today is to explore of quality and safety from a platform of collaboration and transparency, and to provide education throughout the event.



Q. Is there a particular survey experience that stands out in your mind?

A: There is no single experience that stands out. But what does resonate during every survey is the feeling I get when the team breathes a collective sigh of relief upon realizing that we are there to assess risk and to promote quality and safety in health care. This is the point at which the organization’s staff members relax and take a more active role in the survey process.



Q. What advice would you offer an ASC preparing for its first Joint Commission survey?

A: Our survey is not for the faint of heart. Continuous survey readiness is the key to success. It’s a marathon, not a sprint!

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Q: What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing ASCs today?

A: Health care organizations and personnel at all levels are still reeling from the effects of the COVID pandemic in terms of supply chains, staffing levels, and regulatory requirements. The current challenge is to meet the dynamic new normal. The good news is that I have seen surveys that demonstrate that organizations have accepted the challenges and addressed them with innovative and successful approaches.



Q: How do you think Joint Commission accreditation helps ASCs meet today’s challenges?

A: Through the use of onsite and virtual survey events, extensive educational offerings, and a strong ongoing collaborative partnership with accredited organizations, The Joint Commission remains relevant and responsive to today’s health care challenges.



Q: The Joint Commission recently did an ROI study that proved that for each dollar invested in Joint Commission accreditation, an organization sees that dollar returned and realizes an additional \$6.28 in benefits as a direct result of accreditation. Several key areas of return were identified, including financial, improvements and efficiencies, risk and safety, and staffing.

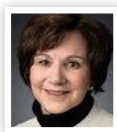
Why do you think Joint Commission accreditation has such a positive impact on these areas?

A: The Joint Commission’s quest for promoting high reliability in quality and safety in health care has positive outcomes. While on survey, team members often share the confidence that comes with the public’s view of the facility, as well as staff pride in having successfully navigated the survey process. The second-order effects of these outcomes have the potential to positively impact both center utilization and staff retention.



Q: What would you tell organizations considering Joint Commission accreditation?

A: Just do it! While achieving/maintaining accreditation is a rigorous process, enhanced patient care outcomes, community confidence, and recognition from an enduring partnership with a world-class accreditation organization will pay dividends in both quality and safety.



Susan Annicelli, RN, MS, MSN

Ambulatory Care Surveyor
THE JOINT COMMISSION

Susan Annicelli currently splits her time between South Carolina and Cape Cod. As a half-time surveyor, she surveys ambulatory organizations throughout the United States within the full scope of the Joint Commission's Ambulatory Programs.

Ms. Annicelli has earned bachelor's and master's degrees in Nursing, a master's degree in Anesthesia Nursing, a master's degree in Strategic Studies, and has been awarded an honorary Doctor of Nursing degree from the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth. Much of her professional career has been spent in various roles in the United States Army Medical Department.

In her spare time, Ms. Annicelli loves spending time with her family, especially traveling and learning alongside her grandchildren. She also enjoys beachcombing and collecting sea glass. Her home is decorated with baskets and jars of beautiful pieces collected from beaches all over the world.

Learn more about the value of Joint Commission ambulatory surgery center accreditation for your organization. Visit us at www.jointcommission.org/ahc or write to us at ahcquality@jointcommission.org.
