Approved: New and Revised Pain Assessment and Management Standards

Effective January 1, 2019, new and revised pain assessment and management standards will be applicable to Joint Commission–accredited ambulatory care organizations, critical access hospitals, and office-based surgery practices. This project is a continuation of the initiative that resulted in new and revised pain assessment and management requirements for hospitals effective in January 2018 (see July 2017 Perspectives, pages 1, 3, and 4).

The project's R3 Report provides the rationales for the new requirements as well as references to the research articles and reports used to develop them. The program-tailored standards are designed to strengthen organizations' practices for pain assessment, treatment, education, and monitoring. The pain assessment and management requirements are now included in the “Leadership” (LD) chapter at Standard LD.04.03.13; the “Provision of Care, Treatment, and Services” chapter at Standard PC.01.02.07; the “Performance Improvement” chapter at Standards PI.01.01.01 and PI.02.01.01; and the “Medical Staff” chapter (applicable to critical access hospitals only) at Standard MS.05.01.01.

The enhanced elements of performance will require organizations to do the following:

- Provide staff and licensed independent practitioners with educational resources and programs to improve pain assessment, pain management, and the safe use of opioid medications based on the identified needs of their patient populations
- Involve patients in developing their treatment plans and setting realistic expectations and measurable goals
- Facilitate clinician access to prescription drug monitoring program databases
- Conduct performance improvement activities focusing on pain management and safe prescribing to increase safety and quality for patients
- Ensure that the critical access hospital organized medical staff take an active part in pain assessment, pain management, and safe opioid prescribing through participating in the establishment of protocols, quality metrics, and reviewing performance improvement activities
- Monitor high-risk patients in critical access hospitals

Because a substantial burden of pain exists throughout the United States, combined with gaps in the evidence on optimal pain management and a continuing opioid crisis, it is necessary to provide applicable accreditation programs with contemporary guidance for pain assessment and management, including safe opioid prescribing. In addition to an extensive literature review and public field review, The Joint Commission obtained expert guidance from the following groups:

- A Technical Advisory Panel of practicing clinicians from various health care and academic organizations, professional associations, and the payor and health technology sectors
● A **Primary Care Panel** of experts in chronic noncancer pain management in the primary care setting such as members of leading health care organizations with ongoing safe prescribing and provider education initiatives

● A **Standards Review Panel** of representatives from organizations or professional associations who provided a “boots on the ground” point of view and insights into the practical application of the proposed standards

The standards changes will be displayed on the [Prepublication Standards](#) page of The Joint Commission website. All requirements do not apply to all settings in the ambulatory care program. A standards applicability grid is forthcoming on the above website.

The revisions will also be included in the fall 2018 E-dition® update and the 2019 hard copy publications of the *Comprehensive Accreditation Manuals* for the ambulatory care and critical access hospital programs.

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