1999 Ernest Amory Codman Award Recipient

Organization Award: Ambulatory Care

Occupational Health, Environmental, and Safety Services
Ft. Meade, Maryland

For Its Initiative: "From Sick Call to Medical Screening"

Occupational Health, Environmental, and Safety Services operate an ambulatory care center at the headquarters complex of the National Security Agency. One of the center's missions is to provide military assignees with episodic walk-in services that will enable them to remain on the job whenever appropriate.

The goal of this initiative was to move from a traditional military sick call model for walk-in services to one reflecting new realities. These realities included a diminishing budget and staff; a renewed emphasis on the center's original occupational health mission; and a variety of major changes in the Tricare, the military health care system.

From the outset of the initiative in October 1998, the center's leadership was committed to the principle that staff members, not management, would "own" the program. A process improvement team, consisting entirely of front-line care providers, led the initiative and did the following:

- Benchmarked against several comparable clinics in the area.
- Selected an algorithm-based "medical screening" model (developed by the military) and tailored it to the needs of the center. This model made more effective use of the skills of the center's medical technicians, nurses and pharmacists.
- Published a manual that explained in detail the new model of care.
- Designed a training program and formal certification process for all staff members.
- Developed a variety of measures of skill-based staff competence, patient satisfaction, patient outcomes and program efficiency. All measures were designed to be as straightforward and user-friendly as possible.

Nine months into the program, the results were encouraging.

- On both immediate and short-term (two weeks) follow-up, patients report a high level of satisfaction with the quality and appropriateness of care received.
- Average patient waiting time has been reduced by 35 percent.
- Eighty percent of staff members report that their level of job satisfaction has stayed the same or improved.
- Providers are able to devote more time to other activities that are more central to the center's mission.