

# Establishing a Gold Standard in Ambulatory Accreditation



## Major Initiative To Promote Patient Safety

As organizations involved in ambulatory accreditation continue to upgrade standards in patient care and safety to keep pace with developments in ambulatory surgery, the American Association for Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities (AAAASF) has embarked on a program to set a Gold Standard in ambulatory accreditation.

Understanding that maintaining safety and quality of care in the ambulatory surgery setting is a dynamic process that requires constant review and revision of the standards, AAAASF has developed a program that effectively monitors and implements the latest state-of-the-art advances in outpatient care; advances that directly impact and benefit the patient.

"AAAASF recognized from its inception that the key to accreditation in ambulatory care was clear, well defined standards that correlate directly to patient safety. Then, AAAASF went a step further by requiring board certification and hospital privileges that reflect the procedures a physician is qualified to perform. This requirement is mandatory for all physicians operating in an AAAASF accredited facility," according to James Yates, MD, president of AAAASF.

Unceasing dedication to patient safety in ambulatory care was reaffirmed by the "Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act of 2005," which among other recommendations, stated: "The utilization of patient safety work product for the purposes of encouraging a culture of safety and of providing feedback and assistance to effectively minimize patient risk, and PATIENT SAFETY EVALUATION SYSTEM, where the term 'patient safety evaluation system' means the collection, management, or analysis of information for reporting to or by a patient safety organization. "This very much complements the advances being made in the accreditation of ambulatory facilities to set a Gold Standard.

Creating a Gold Standard is a powerful affirmation of the commitment by ambulatory surgical facilities to patient safety. It also addresses the ever-increasing number of states that are imposing regulatory guidelines and legislation relative to office based and ambulatory surgical facilities in general. Many states, including Tennessee, North Carolina and Arizona, are now requiring accreditation.

In addition to states' concerns, there is a national campaign to report and monitor surgical errors in hospitals and ASCs. Accreditation associations will play a major role in this national endeavor and the results will directly benefit patient care. As part of the Gold Standard program, AAAASF has required the reporting of random case reviews and unanticipated events for the last six years. Studies from these reports have shown the high level of safety in AAAASF accredited


facilities and can only help fuel the continued growth in ambulatory facilities.

A number of surgical organizations (beyond plastic surgery) are insisting that their members work only in accredited units. It behooves physicians to lead the charge for accreditation, for it can only help the patient safety dialog and re-establish the importance of peer review. Surveys have found that staff members feel more comfortable and appreciative to be working in facilities that have received such documentation. More importantly, patients are more comfortable and relaxed in accredited facilities.

During a National Patient Safety Foundation conference in 2002, it was put forth that: "The field may have to take other steps to insure provider competence and compliance. Malpractice insurance could provide one opportunity for the system to persuade practitioners to adhere to standards, one respondent offered. If insurers withheld this benefit from doctors who do not meet certain standards in their office including staffing it with qualified personnel, then you have lot more teeth in ensuring patient safety, this respondent said. But the most frequently mentioned way to regulate quality was accreditation."

Further, a national initiative is being introduced within the independent accreditation industry calling for: "Programs should reward accreditation, or have an equivalent mechanism that recognizes health care organizations' continuous attention to all clinical and support systems and processes that relate to patient safety and health care quality."

The concept of a Gold Standard in the accreditation of surgical facilities especially resonates with patients, who are becoming far more educated about medical topics and options. The Internet and the general media are paying far more attention to medical topics than ever before. This is the era of the "informed patient," who seeks out information about their medical condition even before they consult with a physician. Giving consumers a point of reference when it comes to surgical procedures performed in an ambulatory setting validates the benefits provided by the entire ambulatory accreditation industry.

The American Association for Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities, Inc. (AAAASF) is recognized as the Gold Standard in Accreditation. AAAASF has been a major proponent for peer review reporting and quality improvement in the outpatient surgery environment. It is the mission of AAAASF to develop and implement standards of excellence to ensure the highest quality of patient care through an accreditation program that serves both the medical community and the public interest. 

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