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AAAASF Accreditation Upgrades Safety of Digestive Health & Endoscopy Center

Posted on: 02/02/2006

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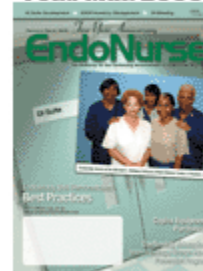
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GURNEE, III. -- Since May of 2001, when it first opened, Digestive Health & Endoscopy Center in Pittsburgh, Pa., has put a high premium on the advancement of patient safety through accreditation. According to medical director M. Samir Ayasso, MD, accreditation is a vital part of the center's operating philosophy.

The endoscopy center previously held a three-year accreditation with one of the other accrediting associations, but felt that their accreditation process did not sufficiently meet its needs. Accreditation standards should provide adequate instruction for the facility to develop and maintain a program that provides quality care to patients. "We felt the former accreditation program did not provide the guidance we wanted and the process became time consuming and stressful, so we were reviewing other options," said Ayasso.

"Last spring, we attended a FASA meeting in San Francisco and visited the American Association for Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities (AAAASF) booth. After reviewing AAAASF standards, we realized

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that the focus on patient safety and infection control was the same as our focus in providing care to patients undergoing endoscopy. The AAAASF standards were easy to understand and the concise format was well organized," he continued.

There were a few standards concerning the physical environment of the operating room that were not applicable to endoscopy, so Ayasso submitted a waiver request to the board for consideration. The AAAASF board agreed with Ayasso and waived the requirements in question, which it felt would not compromise patient safety standards in this center.

Accreditation had special significance for Digestive Health & Endoscopy Center because many of AAAASF's standards are also requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Health for licensure as a Class B Ambulatory Surgical Facility.

"We are a single-specialty ASF that performs only gastrointestinal endoscopy and the AAAASF standards easily apply to our facility, especially with regards to infection control, equipment safety and administration of conscious sedation," adds Ayasso.

"There is such a plethora of subspecialty ambulatory surgical facilities today and we are very pleased that AAAASF is able to provide accreditation that is appropriate for our specialty. The inspection was relevant to gastrointestinal tract endoscopy and allowed us to concentrate on related issues, thus providing superior care to our patients," said Ayasso.

He has advice for other endoscopy centers seeking accreditation. First, he would advise the physician to work closely with the nurse manager and review the state licensure requirements alongside AAAASF standards. He stresses that they need to have a clear picture of all the requirements before deciding the layout of the facility. If possible, it is helpful to visit other ambulatory facilities that perform the same procedures and find out what changes, in hindsight, they would make.

Second, he recommends that the physician and nurse manager belong to appropriate professional organizations to take

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advantage of the many resources they can provide.

Third, be sure to review and organize your policies with your Standards and Checklist manual to make sure that you are in compliance with all of the requirements.

"Accreditation is a key component of our endoscopy center because it sets high standards for performance that translates into better patient safety procedures and a better trained staff," concludes Ayasso. "In fact, I have recommended AAAASF to other ambulatory endoscopy centers and to a dermatologist performing office surgery in our community."

The American Association for Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities, Inc. (AAAASF) is recognized as the gold standard in accreditation. AAAASF is 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.

Source: AAAASF