Speak Up: National Campaign Urges Patients to Join Safety Efforts

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) has launched a patient-focused, error-prevention, national initiative that all patients and professionals should be aware of. The program, called “Speak Up,” encourages patients to be active, involved and informed participants in their health care. This initiative is based on research showing that patients who take part in decisions about their health care are more likely to have better outcomes. From an ethics perspective, the program is an additional way for patients and their family members to exercise their right of patient autonomy or self-determination.

The following summary is from the “Speak Up” brochure that is addressed to patients:

Speak up if you have questions or concerns, and if you don’t understand, ask again. It’s your body and you have a right to know.

Pay attention to the care you are receiving. Make sure you’re getting the right treatments and medications by the right health care professionals. Don’t assume anything.

Educate yourself about your diagnosis, the medical tests you are undergoing, and your treatment plan.

Ask a trusted family member or friend to be your advocate.

Know what medications you take and why you take them. Medication errors are the most common health care errors.

Use a hospital, clinic, surgery center, or other type of health care organization that has undergone a rigorous on-site evaluation against established state-of-the-art quality and safety standards, such as that provided by JCAHO.

Participate in all decisions about your treatment. You are the center of the health care team.

Patients and professionals can download a “Speak Up” brochure that provides specific guidance to patients to help them make their care safe by visiting the JCAHO website. The brochure is also available by calling JCAHO’s Customer Service Center at 630-792-5800, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday.