

Please share with all MHMH providers at your office location



December 9, 2009

Dear Colleague,

As Chair of the Medical Records Committee, I'm writing to inform you of some changes coming in the New Year regarding histories and physicals. For some years now, The Joint Commission (TJC) has required that every patient in the hospital have a history and physical available within 24 hours after admission or prior to surgical procedures.

Health Information Management tracks admissions to verify that we are meeting this requirement. The good news is over 95% of our H&Ps are present within the 24 hour time requirement! The bad news is TJC expects 100%. We are being told TJC will be specifically looking at H&P compliance on their next visit. As few as 3 missing H&Ps generates an "RFI" (recommendation for improvement) and possible conditional accreditation. To be sure we weren't misinterpreting, we have clarified the actual meaning of this time requirement and received response from CMS that this does indeed mean the stopwatch starts at the time of the admit order; and we have 24 hours to get an H&P available on the chart.

You may remember earlier this year when we started immediate suspensions for H&Ps missing at 24 hours as outlined in our Rules and Regulations. Many of you were caught off guard by this and resented being called after you had already missed the deadline and were suspended. We certainly heard your complaints and stopped the immediate suspensions until we could create a better process. Since then we have been working on ways to achieve the goal of 100% H&Ps present within 24 hours. We have met repeatedly and received recommendations from HIM directors, administration, and senior medical staff leaders. Final proposals have been approved by the Medical Executive Committee and are presented to you here.

Beginning January 4, 2010, we will again begin suspending at 24 hours if an H&P is not available on the chart. The stopwatch will start at the time of the admit order. We will make every effort to contact the physician as the 24 hour deadline grows near. For the few physicians who have had multiple late H&Ps this past year, you will be contacted separately and required to formulate an action plan to present to administration and senior leadership. Repeatedly late H&Ps will trigger recommendation for a shortened reappointment. Additional measures have been proposed by senior leadership for adoption, if necessary. These include limiting service sizes, stopping all admissions for suspended physicians (not just elective admits) or required use of a nurse practitioner (for a charge) to complete the H&P.

Much time and thought has gone in to developing this action plan with the goal of meeting TJC requirements without creating undue burden on our medical staff. We certainly understand that physicians are busy and will make every effort to help those few physicians having trouble meeting this requirement.

As always, I'm open to all of your feedback (positive or negative) so please feel free to contact me with questions/concerns/comments at 418-3037 (pgr) or 596-5846 (cell). In fact, we are looking for more physician involvement on the Medical Records Committee to ensure that we are addressing the concerns of our medical staff. If you are interested in joining us, please let me know.

Heather Swanson, MD
Chairperson, MHMH Medical Records Committee