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PHA Supports OIG Recommendations on Emergency Care Policy

(January 10, 2008) - Following today's release of the HHS Inspector General's study of emergency care and staffing policies in 109 physician owned specialty hospitals, Physician Hospitals of America (PHA) endorsed the IG's recommendations and called on CMS and Congress to conduct the same review of similar size tax-exempt community hospitals. PHA is the national association representing hospitals that are governed and owned by physicians.

PHA Executive Director Molly Sandvig said, "According to the IG, 93% of the hospitals reviewed complied with Medicare's staffing requirements. However, PHA strongly believes that all hospitals must meet Medicare's conditions of participation. Any hospital, regardless of ownership, that is not meeting its obligations under Medicare's rules needs to get its act together or suffer the consequences. CMS should examine the actions of the eight hospitals cited by the IG and take all appropriate steps."

She added that "PHA has already endorsed CMS efforts to improve the quality of responses to emergency situations in all hospitals. The recommendations that the IG made to CMS are appropriate and should apply to every hospital treating Medicare patients."

Independent studies have confirmed the high quality of care provided in physician owned hospitals. Ms. Sandvig said, "We are proud of the high quality of medical care that our members provide. Numerous government and private studies support the high quality of care offered to patients by the physician hospital industry."

Sandvig went on to say that, "No hospital should use 911 as a substitute for providing proper care to patients. Medicare allows all hospitals to use 911 for transfers once the patient is stabilized, but every hospital must be able to provide medically necessary responses to emergency situations."

Sandvig further stated that the study is limited because it does not address the most significant issues: Was there any impact on the quality of patient care as a consequence of the IG's findings? And how do these findings compare to the practices of comparable general hospitals?

PHA president Douglas Johnson said, "This study is a snapshot of one small part of the hospital delivery system in this country. PHA calls on the IG to expand its review to include all types of hospitals. Congress should not act until it has a more complete picture of the policies and practices of a wide variety of hospitals."

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