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SYMBION
HEALTHCARE

FOCUS ON Quality

Symbion Plays Key Role in National Outcomes Reporting Project

Of the many potential changes on the horizon for ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs), perhaps none is gathering more steam than 'pay for performance' – a concept that would link an ASC's reimbursement to its ability to deliver care according to a set of evidence-based quality measures.

Though still in the early stages of development, a national quality monitoring program would require all ASCs to report outcomes data for a set of universal measures. In addition to making this information available to consumers through a website, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) could link data reporting to payments to ASCs. A similar program already exists for acute care hospitals.

As part of the ASC Quality Collaboration, a national coalition of ASC companies and associations that has taken the lead in determining what the program might look like, Symbion is at the forefront of this important movement. In addition to providing input on the selection of six standardized quality measures, some Symbion facilities are collecting and reporting data as part of a pilot program.

The six measures, which have been endorsed by the National Quality Forum (NQF), include:

- Patient Burn
- Prophylactic Intravenous Antibiotic Timing
- Patient Fall Within the ASC
- Wrong Site, Wrong Side, Wrong Patient, Wrong Procedure, Wrong Implant
- Hospital Transfer/Admission
- Appropriate Hair Removal

According to Steve Whitmore, Vice President of Corporate Services and a member of the Collaboration's advisory group, Symbion's participation in the pilot has been beneficial on several levels.

"Many of our centers were already collecting outcomes data in these areas as part of their own process improvement initiatives," he said. "In



addition to giving us a voice in determining what data will be measured, this exercise has allowed us to identify best practices at individual facilities and share them throughout our system. We believe this puts us in an even stronger position for the rollout of a national initiative."

A Look Ahead

While Symbion's participation in the ASC Quality Collaboration's pilot is voluntary, all ASCs may soon be asked to submit data related to these measures to CMS on a quarterly basis. To ensure widespread support, CMS is expected to tie reimbursement to participation once the initiative gets off the ground. The payment system and conditions would likely mirror the system currently in place with acute care hospitals. Additionally, ASCs will no longer be paid for certain "never events," including wrong surgery, wrong patient or wrong body part surgeries.

Also on the horizon is the expansion of the initial six measures. Select centers in the Symbion network are currently participating in a separate pilot designed to test the collection of data for additional measures,

continued inside



A wise man once said "change is inevitable; progress is optional." Just halfway into 2009, that old saying rings especially true.

Already this year, we've seen our fair share of change. In January, new surgery center payment rates took effect and, more recently, we began operating under new conditions of coverage for Medicare participation. With the debate over healthcare reform taking center stage, more changes are likely on the horizon.

That's why it's more important than ever for each and every facility to make its voice heard. Whether fighting for legislation that protects patient access to same-day surgical services or piloting a new system for publicly reporting outcomes data, every Symbion facility should not only understand the issues facing our industry but also play an active role in shaping the outcome. This edition of *Symbion Connection* provides an overview of many of these issues and outlines ways for you to get involved.

Even in the midst of change, I continue to be impressed by the progress we are making. From finding ways to bring new surgical procedures into our facilities to overcoming challenges to achieve success, the centers profiled in these pages serve as an example of what can be accomplished through old fashioned ingenuity and perseverance.

Nowhere is the drive and determination to succeed more evident than in this year's award winners. While the circumstances at each of these centers differ greatly, they all share a willingness to set ambitious goals and apply a laser-like focus to achieve them. My thanks and congratulations to each of the individuals associated with these centers. Your efforts inspire us all.

As always, I thank you for your continued hard work and dedication to our physician partners and patients.

Very truly yours,

RICHARD E. FRANCIS JR.
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer

Surprise! Symbion Honors Year's Best With On-Site Celebrations

For Kimble Hatridge and the employees and physicians of Texarkana Surgery Center, June 9 started out like any other day. The multi-specialty center's staff was busy tending to patients and Hatridge, who has served as administrator since 2002, sat at her desk awaiting a long-scheduled conference call with Symbion's corporate staff.

Just as her call was set to begin, Hatridge was summoned to the lobby where she got the surprise of a lifetime. Greeted by members of Symbion's management team, including CEO Richard Francis and President Cliff Adlerz, she was presented a large trophy honoring Symbion's Center of the Year.

"My jaw just hit the ground," Hatridge recalls. "I could hardly process what was happening. It was such an honor and for them to travel to our facility to surprise our staff made it even more special."

Little did Hatridge know that the on-site visit was just the beginning of the surprise. After the trophy was presented, the entire staff was treated to a catered luncheon and chair massages – organized with the help of a single Texarkana employee who had been sworn to secrecy.

A similar scenario was repeated later that week in San Antonio as another surprise visit honored NorthEast Baptist Surgery Center, winner of the 2008 Turnaround Center of the Year. The on-site celebrations were a first for the company, which has traditionally honored winners of its most prestigious awards at an annual management meeting.

"Each of these centers has achieved remarkable growth and success during the past year, and serve as an inspiration to us all," said Richard E. Francis,

Symbion's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. "We recognize that it is the hard work and dedication of many individuals who make this success possible so we felt it was important to honor the entire team and thank them for a job well done."

Symbion Connection spoke with the leaders of this year's winning facilities to learn what sets them apart. Here are some of the highlights:



Texarkana Administrator Kimble Hatridge is congratulated by Symbion President Cliff Adlerz (L) and CEO Richard Francis (R)



The corporate and regional staff joined Texarkana in celebrating their win. (L-R): David Williamson, Darrell Naish, Kimble Hatridge, Gregg Stanley, Holly McCourt, Tracy Naylor

Center of the Year
Texarkana Surgery Center • Texarkana, Texas
Administrator: Kimble Hatridge

SC: What makes your facility Center of the Year?

KH: We are truly blessed with a wonderful staff and great physicians who work extremely well together. I think there's a great sense of balance here. We all know our strengths and weaknesses and work to draw out the best in each other for the good of our organization. So where I may be weak in one area, I know I can ask my colleague who is stronger to step up. We've really focused on building a culture that lifts up the talents of everyone in a way that moves us all forward.

SPECIALTY SURGICAL CENTER – BRIGHTON WAY EARNS BRINKS AWARD

Presented to the facility that excels in all areas of financial management, this year's Brinks Award winner outscored its peers in a long list of categories including A/R days, EBITDA margin, inventory days and operating income ratio.

By increasing case volumes and improving collections while reducing supply costs and other expenses, Specialty Surgical Center (SSC) – Brighton Way in Los Angeles exceeded their projected budget by 68 percent. According to Vickie Arjoan, who has been with SSC for more than 10 years, the win was truly a team effort.

"There was no one thing that put us over

the top," she said. "We just knew we had a goal and we focused on improving our numbers every month."

Arjoan is quick to give credit to the center's staff as well as the region's centralized business office. Under the leadership of Director Brian Gray, the business office exceeded their own projections for collections. "Our win wouldn't have been possible without the teamwork and commitment of our entire staff. This award shows what an impact it makes when everyone does their part."

Employees will celebrate later this summer with a group outing to a Dodgers game.



The staff of Specialty Surgical Center – Brighton Way show off their award.

SC: What is your management philosophy?

KH: I always tell our staff that as soon as you think you're at the top of your game, that's when you're not. There's always room for improvement so we're constantly looking for a new or better way of doing something. We want to stand out. We want to be innovative. Everyone laughs because things don't stay the same here for long. Something's always evolving!

SC: Tell us about some of the specific steps you took to grow volumes in 2008.

KH: We added a neurosurgery program that really took off in 2008. We also began laying the foundation for a lap band surgery program that we officially launched in January of 2009. While both of the new programs have significantly improved volumes, we couldn't have had the year we did without the continued growth and success of our core services. We grew these services by just staying focused on what matters – patient and physician satisfaction.

SC: So how surprised were you when you were ambushed in the lobby?

KH: I was completely blindsided! I still don't think I've recovered. I'm usually the prankster so – next to my husband proposing – this was the biggest surprise someone's ever been able to pull over on me! In all seriousness, it was a huge honor for our entire staff.

Turnaround Center of the Year NorthEast Baptist Surgery Center • San Antonio, Texas Administrator: Misty Walton

SC: What was your reaction when you found out your facility had been named Turnaround Center of the Year?

MW: We were thrilled! This is the award we all wanted to win. I knew we were facing a tough year so we set our sights on it and worked hard to deliver the best results possible.

SC: What challenges did the facility overcome this year?

MW: We started the year projecting a loss and ended it with a profit. After a competitor opened a new surgery center in our area, we saw a significant decline in cases. We realized very quickly we had to find a way to adapt and survive while we focused on rebuilding. As a result, we zeroed in on pediatric dental, which is a service most facilities don't focus on because the reimbursement is traditionally low. To offset this, we worked to build volumes and bring new physicians into our center. At the same time, we focused on expanding our plastic surgery cases and added new services such as lap band surgery and brachytherapy. Slowly but surely, things began to improve and we've

been building on this success ever since.

SC: What role did the staff play in the turnaround?

MW: Our staff has been wonderful. They really stepped up to not only support our efforts to bring new physicians into the center but also deliver the kind of care that brings physicians and patients back time after time. I can't thank them enough.

SC: What's next for your center?

MW: We are focused on continued improvement. This is a long process for us but we believe that we can maintain this success and keep moving forward.

PRESIDENT'S CLUB

Each year, a select group of facilities is honored for meeting financial benchmarks and other operational goals while maintaining outstanding quality standards. Congratulations to the following centers for earning a place in the 2008 President's Club:

Bellingham Surgery Center
Central Park Surgery Center
CMMP Surgical Center
Cool Springs Ambulatory Surgery Center
Cypress Surgery Center
Greater New Orleans Surgery Center
Lakeside Women's Hospital
NorthEast Baptist Surgery Center
NorthStar Surgical Center
Oxford Surgery Center
Premier Surgery Center (Georgia)
Specialty Surgical Center – Brighton Way
Specialty Surgical Center – Encino
Specialty Surgical Center – Irvine
St. Louis Spine & Orthopedic Surgery Center
Tampa Bay Regional Surgery Center
Texarkana Surgery Center
Timberlake Surgery Center
Valley Surgery Center (Ohio)

grassroots alert

ASCs Face Challenges In The Year Ahead

2009 has been an eventful year for short-stay surgical facilities.

Following new payment rates that took effect in January, additional changes to the standards ASCs must meet to be Medicare-certified became effective in May. With a new administration, a new Congress and a renewed focus on healthcare reform, more changes are likely around the corner. As a result, the need for ambulatory surgery centers to speak out has never been greater.

for the ASC industry.”

According to Bryant, that education can take many forms. Whether calling on elected officials directly or inviting them into your facility for a tour or fundraiser, building personal relationships is vital to the success of any grassroots outreach.

“Because legislation targeting physician ownership of ASCs often originates at the state level, it’s important to put equal focus on your ASC’s local and state representatives,” she adds.

What’s At Stake?

While it’s too soon to know what changes may be introduced later in the legislative session, a key area of focus for ASCs remains the Medicare payment system, which currently reimburses ASCs at 59 percent of hospital outpatient department (HOPD) rates for performing identical services.

Future projections show payments to ASCs could diverge from hospital payments even further, falling as low as 50 percent within five years. This continued decrease comes in spite of the fact that ASCs face the same inflationary challenges as hospitals in hiring and retaining staff and purchasing medical supplies.

Bi-partisan legislation introduced earlier this year would level the playing field between ASCs and HOPDs by fixing ASC reimbursements at the current percentage of HOPD rates. The Ambulatory Surgical Center Access Act of 2009 (see sidebar) also would standardize the quality and cost information available to consumers. Currently, CMS can require ASCs and HOPDs to report different quality information for the same procedure. The ASCA will continue to advocate for this important legislation as well as other changes that would provide greater equity between ASCs and HOPDs. Other key priorities for 2009 include:

- Promoting quality reporting that is transparent and implemented in a way that will not increase ASC costs.
- Stave off any cuts in ASC rates to pay for other programs.

ABOUT THE AMBULATORY SURGICAL CENTER ACCESS ACT OF 2009

In April, U.S. Representatives Kendrick Meek (D-FL) and Wally Herger (R-CA) introduced legislation that would fix ASC payments at the current 59 percent of hospital outpatient department rates (HOPD). If adopted, the Ambulatory Surgical Center Access Act of 2009 (H.R. 2049) would:

- resolve the increasing discrepancy between HOPD and ASC payment rates;
- require comparable quality reporting standards for ASCs and HOPDs;
- address a recently adopted regulation affecting ASCs’ ability to schedule and provide surgery to patients on the same day only when medically necessary.

All ASCs should contact their US Representatives and ask them to co-sponsor the legislation. To send an electronic letter, go to www.ascassociation.org/advocacy/, and click on ASC Action Needed Today!

“In many ways, our challenge is much the same as it has always been – educating every member of Congress and the administration about the outstanding care that ASCs provide and the cost-effective, patient-focused services we offer,” said Kathy Bryant, president of the Ambulatory Surgery Center Association (ASCA). “Once we reach policymakers with this message, no matter what political party they support, they typically remain lifelong advocates



- Ensure the continued ability of physicians to participate fully in ASCs.

With the growing emphasis on expanding healthcare coverage to include many of the more than 46 million uninsured Americans, ASC advocates and critics alike agree that ensuring access to lower cost, high quality care will become more important than ever.

How You Can Help

- Educate your local media on the benefits of ASCs. Write a letter to the editor.
- Host a fundraiser for your local member of Congress.
- Participate in National ASC Open House Day (August 11) by opening your doors to your members of Congress and their staff as well as your local community.
- Write your member of Congress to enlist their support on the Ambulatory Surgical Center Access Act of 2009 and other ASC legislation.

Get involved now and make sure ASCs are represented in this important debate! For assistance, contact the ASCA at ASCPAC@ascassociation.org or call 703.836.8808.

DID YOU KNOW?

As recently as 2003, Medicare paid ASCs 86 percent of hospital outpatient department rates. A multi-year payment freeze and further cuts have reduced those payments to 59 percent.

FOCUS ON: *Quality continued from front page*

including patient satisfaction, surgical site infection and medication administration. If approved by the NQF, CMS may eventually require ASCs to submit data on these measures as well.

According to Gina Throneberry, who also serves on the Collaboration's advisory group, identifying a standard set of quality measures will raise the bar for all ASCs.

"These quality measures not only provide shared benchmarks centers can use to gauge their progress against other centers, but also help facilities in their accreditation efforts," said Throneberry, RN, Symbion's AVP of Corporate Services. "Most importantly, this initiative will give the public a new window into the safety and quality of services offered by ASCs."

BEST PRACTICES IN ACTION

Asheville surgery center improves antibiotic timing

The administration of prophylactic antibiotics prior to surgery is just one of the quality measures ASCs soon will be required to report. Proven to dramatically reduce the risk of post-surgical infection, the NQF recommends that antibiotics be administered 60 minutes or less prior to incision.

While many centers struggle to meet these guidelines, a simple change in the pre-op protocol has helped one Symbion center achieve near perfect compliance. After a review revealed antibiotics were not always infused within the recommended window of time, The Orthopaedic Surgery Center of Asheville (OSCA) in Asheville, N.C., worked with its anesthesiology provider to implement a performance improvement initiative.

By shifting the responsibility of administering the antibiotics from a pre-op nurse to a certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA), the center was able to standardize its process.

"When we took a closer look, we found it can be difficult for our pre-op nurses to know exactly when to administer the antibiotics since it's not unusual for the OR to finish early or occasionally run behind," said

Administrator R.J. Noid. "By making it a part of the pre-op checklist the CRNA goes through with the patient prior to surgery, we were able to select a fixed point in time for the antibiotic to be delivered."

Since implementing the new protocol in late 2007, OSCA has maintained 99.4 percent compliance with NQF guidelines. Noid also reports that having a single point of contact has made it easier to identify – and correct – issues within the system.

"Standardizing this process has allowed us to gain greater control and dramatically reduce the risk of infection," he said. "This is just one small – but very important – step we can take to make our center even safer for patients."



OSCA staff members (L-R) Pat Taylor, RN; Craig Toms, CRNA; Barbara Bader, RN; and Randy Rehyer, CRNA



Marcus Williamson, President of NeoSpine Services; Cliff Adlerz, President & COO; Ken Mitchell, SVP of Mergers & Acquisitions

Physicians Come Together for Annual Meeting

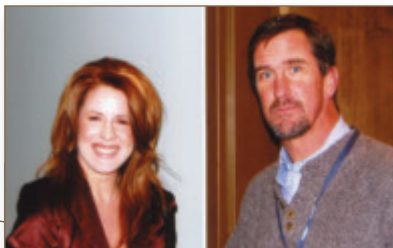
Symbion held its annual Medical Directors & Physicians Leadership Meeting in Avon, Colorado, in February. More than 80 physicians and corporate staff members attended the event, which featured speakers from the ASC Association and the American Medical Association.



Tony Giambardino, MD, of Valley Ambulatory Surgery Center in St. Charles, Ill., with Marcy Atheney, RVP, Northeast Region



Tony Taparo, President, Atlantic Group; George Wortham, MD, Memphis Obstetrics & Gynecology; George Goodwin, SVP/Chief Development Officer



Teresa Sparks, SVP/CFO with Joe Wieck, MD, of Premier Orthopaedic Surgery Center



Joe Sowell, Waller Lansden Dortch & Davis and Richard N.W. Wohns, MD, of Microsurgical Spine Center

Facilities grow through new procedures

All surgical facilities strive to increase volumes while maintaining – and consistently improving – clinical quality, access and patient safety. Two Symbion facilities have found a way to achieve all of the above with the addition of innovative new procedures.

Lakeside Women's Hospital recently joined only a handful of facilities in the country offering minimally-invasive laparoscopic hysterectomies and other gynecological surgeries. After investing in the daVinci robotic surgical system in early 2009, the Oklahoma City-based surgical hospital established the Lakeside Robotic Surgery Institute for Women.

Finding a Niche

Though robotic surgery has become an increasingly common alternative for cardiac and urology procedures, Lakeside is the only facility in the area using the system primarily for gynecological surgeries. In addition to providing surgeons with enhanced, 3-D images of the surgical field, patients benefit through reduced pain, shorter length of stay, faster recovery, reduced risk of infection, and less scarring and blood loss.

According to Lakeside Chief Executive Officer Kelley Brewer, the hospital's decision to add the robotic technology was part of an effort to create a comprehensive center focused on improving gynecological surgical services and outcomes.

"We believe it is important to not only offer the most advanced technology, but also serve as a resource to women facing difficult decisions regarding their health," she said. "By forming the Lakeside Robotic Surgery Institute for Women, we are able to educate women about their surgical options, provide one-on-one counseling, and track and compare outcomes to traditional laparoscopic surgeries. As a result, we have been able to bring significant benefits to patients in a way that is not offered anywhere else in our market."

Innovation Through Adaptation

Meanwhile, **Oxford Surgery Center** in Oxford, Miss., recently became the first ASC in the Symbion network to offer partial knee replacement surgery. Though the procedure was approved for the ASC setting in early 2008, few centers perform the surgery, which



Dr. Susan Chambers of Lakeside Women's Hospital with the new daVinci robotic surgical system

typically requires a two-day hospital stay.

By adopting the same surgical protocol used in acute-care hospitals and engaging patients in rehabilitation activities several days prior to surgery, Oxford has been able to adapt the procedure to an outpatient setting. With several successful surgeries under their belt, the center recently launched a marketing campaign to spread the word.

"We see tremendous potential for expanding this service line both within the primary market as well as in neighboring communities," said former Oxford Administrator Kerrye Allen, who recently transitioned to a new role as Administrator of Symbion's Baptist Germantown Surgery Center. "Both patients and surgeons have been thrilled with the early success of the program."

In addition to lower costs and higher staff-to-patient ratios, Allen says patients appreciate the opportunity to begin their recovery in the comfort of their own home.

"As long as the patient selection process is followed carefully, it's a win-win for everyone."

Symbion welcomes Austin Surgical Hospital

Symbion continues to expand its network of short-stay surgical facilities with the addition of Austin Surgical Hospital in Austin, Texas. The company acquired an ownership stake in the 23-bed facility in May.

The specialized hospital offers a wide range of inpatient and outpatient surgical services including bariatric, orthopedic,

plastic/reconstructive and neurosurgery. In addition to six state-of-the-art operating rooms, the hospital includes a full-service imaging department, an in-house lab, emergency room and intensive care unit. Austin Surgical Hospital is Symbion's eighth facility in Texas and its fourth surgical hospital nationwide. Welcome to all employees and physicians!

shortcuts
Symbion news from around the country