

SCHQT seeks to safely reduce cost of care



South Carolina Healthcare Quality Trust seeks to eliminate preventable infections, safely reduce cost of care

Voluntary collaborative among Health Sciences South Carolina, South Carolina Hospital Association and Premier healthcare alliance to benefit all 65 acute care hospitals in the state

COLUMBIA, S.C., February 4, 2009 – Each year, the Centers for Disease Control estimates there are 1.7 million infections and 99,000 associated deaths in America's hospitals, a situation that costs the nation's healthcare system \$6.2 billion each year. Today, a visionary group of healthcare leaders in South Carolina declared, "enough is enough," vowing to eliminate preventable healthcare-associated infections from the state's hospitals.

Health Sciences South Carolina (HSSC), the South Carolina Hospital Association (SCHA), and the Premier healthcare alliance have announced the formation of the South Carolina Healthcare Quality Trust, a voluntary, statewide hospital and research university performance partnership. The collaborative's first project will employ research to identify causes and solutions to preventable infections and then share the results with all 65 of the state's acute care hospitals. The three partners will be investing more than \$1.7 million over three years in the effort.

The return on investment has the potential to be significant. Based on Premier data from 16 South Carolina hospitals representing 42 percent of the state's annual discharges, these efforts have the potential to save the state's hospitals as much as \$40 million and reduce the length of stay of South Carolina patients by up to 24,000 days.

"We all know someone whose life has been altered, sometimes permanently, by a preventable infection," said HSSC President and CEO Jay Moskowitz. "South Carolina believes it is time for change. Through the South Carolina Healthcare Quality Trust, we will be using our state's best researchers to determine the causes of specific infections. We will test solutions in our state's four largest health systems, which today treat about 30 percent of all patients. We will then share the best practices, products, and services that result with all South Carolina hospitals. We believe this approach has the potential to make our state's hospitals safer for patients, families and employees; avoid millions in costs; and make our state a national model for healthcare quality."

A unique approach to a national problem

While other states also are addressing the issue of healthcare-associated infections, none are doing it like South Carolina. The voluntary effort includes the state's largest research universities through HSSC—Clemson University, the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) and the University of South Carolina (USC) as well as all of the state's hospitals through SCHA. South Carolina Healthcare Quality Trust partners see this as a proactive approach that does more than find better treatments for healthcare-associated infections, but creates new ways to prevent them from happening in the first place.

"Hospital acquired infections are a serious threat to patient health and safety in all hospitals, and they add significantly to the cost of care. South Carolina hospitals are not immune to this problem, but they are working on all fronts to identify and eradicate preventable infections," said Thornton Kirby, president and CEO of the South Carolina Hospital Association. "We anticipate that this ground-breaking partnership between SCHA, Health Sciences South Carolina, and Premier will bring the latest research and best practice information to every hospital bed in the state."

In 2006, SCHA worked with legislators on the state's Hospital Infections Disclosure Act, which requires hospitals to report certain categories of infections to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). Last year DHEC published preliminary numbers on its website. SCHA also has a public website at www.myschospital.org that provides validated hospital-specific performance data.

Technology to help develop, share best practices

Among the Trust's first tasks is the creation of a special information-sharing portal that will allow all South Carolina hospitals to research the causes of healthcare-associated infections, and to identify and promote existing and new processes for prevention. Hospitals will be able to track their improvement against state and national benchmarks via the Performance Improvement Portal, Premier's knowledge exchange community of more than 1,500 healthcare experts nationwide.

"Through the South Carolina Healthcare Quality Trust, we are developing an approach to eliminating healthcare-associated infections using evidence-based best practices," said Premier Chief Operating Officer Susan DeVore. "By measuring performance against state and national benchmarks, we will work to become a national model for healthcare quality improvement that every state can utilize to efficiently focus resources and improve the health of

their communities.”

The right people involved

Moskowitz believes the South Carolina Healthcare Quality Trust will succeed because of its broad base of stakeholders and beneficiaries. The HSSC-supported Center for Healthcare Quality, a South Carolina Center of Economic Excellence funded by the General Assembly, will lead the research efforts. The state's four largest health systems and HSSC and SCHA members—Greenville Hospital System, MUSC Health, Palmetto Health, and Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System—will conduct research and test new processes. SCHA will support the rollout to its member hospitals. The efforts of both HSSC and SCHA are supported by The Duke Endowment, a Charlotte-based philanthropic organization committed to improving healthcare, among other things, in the Carolinas.

"It is a true statewide collaborative with the shared vision of safer care for all patients regardless of where they seek care," Moskowitz said.

Only the beginning

This is only the first of many projects planned by the South Carolina Healthcare Quality Trust, said Moskowitz. "We have opportunities for improvement in acute and chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, cancer, and heart and vascular diseases. The good news is that we have many people and organizations with the vision and determination to bring about change, which will improve the quality of life of our citizens and our state. That's good news for everyone."

About Health Sciences South Carolina

Established in April 2004, Health Sciences South Carolina (HSSC) is a statewide public-private collaborative of universities and health systems possessing the shared vision of using health sciences research to improve the health and economic well being of South Carolina. HSSC includes Clemson University, the Medical University of South Carolina, the University of South Carolina, Greenville Hospital System University Medical Center, Palmetto Health, and Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System. For more information, visit www.healthsciencessc.org.

About the South Carolina Hospital Association

Headquartered in Columbia, the South Carolina Hospital Association(SCHA) is a private, not-for-profit organization made up of nearly 100 hospitals and health systems and some 900 individual members. An advocate of healthcare issues affecting South Carolinians, SCHA supports its members through advocacy, education, networking and regulatory assistance. For more information, visit www.scha.org.

About Premier Inc., 2006 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award recipient

Serving more than 2,100 U.S. hospitals and 53,000-plus other healthcare sites, the Premier healthcare alliance and its members are transforming healthcare together. Owned by not-for-profit hospitals, Premier operates one of the leading healthcare purchasing networks and the nation's most comprehensive repository of hospital clinical and financial information. A subsidiary operates one of the nation's largest policyholder owned, hospital professional liability risk-retention groups. A world leader in helping healthcare providers deliver dramatic improvements in care, Premier is working with the United Kingdom's National Health Service North West and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to improve hospital performance. Headquartered in San Diego, Premier has offices in Charlotte, N.C., Philadelphia and Washington. For more information, visit www.premierinc.com.

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WHAT

The South Carolina Healthcare Quality Trust is a voluntary, statewide hospital and research university performance initiative that will address specific healthcare quality challenges. The first phase of the project seeks to eliminate healthcare-associated infections in South Carolina through an innovative approach that will use research to uncover the causes of healthcare-associated infections as well as to share best practices, track performance, and facilitate the implementation of evidence-based prevention processes.

WHO IS INVOLVED

The Trust is composed of these partners: Health Sciences South Carolina (HSSC) and members Clemson University, the Medical University of South Carolina, the University of South Carolina, Greenville Hospital System University Medical Center, Palmetto Health, and Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System; the South Carolina Hospital Association; and the Premier healthcare alliance. The three organizations will invest in excess of \$1.7 million over three years to bring potentially lifesaving changes to South Carolina's hospitals that will result in better, safer care.

WHY

Members of the South Carolina Healthcare Quality Trust believe all patients, their family members, and hospital employees should be safe from healthcare-associated infections. Healthcare-associated infections are infections patients acquire while being treated for other conditions in a healthcare setting. They can happen in hospitals or at a doctor or dentist's office. These preventable infections pose a serious threat to public health and consume valuable financial resources. According to the Centers for Disease Control, there are 1.7 million infections and 99,000 associated deaths each year in American hospitals. Treating patients with preventable infections costs the U.S. healthcare system more than \$6.2 billion annually, an expense cash-strapped hospitals and the public can ill afford.

This initiative seeks to eliminate healthcare-associated infections in the state. If successful, this initiative has the potential to make South Carolina a national model for healthcare quality, reduce the length of stay of South Carolina patients by up to 24,000 days, and save South Carolina hospitals up to \$40 million annually.*

** Based on Premier data from 16 South Carolina hospitals representing 42 percent of the state's annual discharges.*

WHO BENEFITS

The South Carolina Healthcare Quality Trust will share the best practices, products, and services that result from its efforts with all 65 acute care hospitals in the South Carolina. In the short-term, hospitals

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SCHQT Fact Sheet

Add-1

will have access to a performance-improvement and information-sharing portal, which will be used to share new, safer processes for preventing infections. The goal is to make all South Carolina hospitals better and safer for all patients.

HOW IT WILL WORK

The South Carolina Healthcare Quality Trust will combine the resources of its partners to develop solutions to healthcare-associated infections that will benefit all of South Carolina's hospitals, particularly those without the financial and technical resources to address the problem on their own. Each partner brings unique resources and strengths to the table:

Health Sciences South Carolina: Research

HSSC and its university partners will conduct basic, clinical and translational research, while its health system partners also will research and test findings. The work will take place through the Center for Healthcare Quality, a South Carolina Center of Economic Excellence (CoEE).

South Carolina Hospital Association: Translate Findings

Healthcare quality and patient safety are top priorities of SCHA and its *Every Patient Counts* initiative. It will share the initiative's findings with its 65 acute care hospital members.

Premier healthcare alliance: Aggregate and Disseminate Information

Premier is developing a special information-sharing portal for all South Carolina hospitals to participate in the research and identify and promote existing and new processes for prevention. Hospitals will be able to track their improvement against state and national benchmarks via the Performance Improvement Portal, Premier's knowledge exchange community of more than 1,500 healthcare experts nationwide, to develop and share best practices and knowledge on effective strategies for combating healthcare-associated infections.

About Health Sciences South Carolina

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About South Carolina Hospital Association

Founded in 1921, the South Carolina Hospital Association (SCHA) is the leadership organization and principal advocate for the state's hospitals and health care systems. Based in Columbia, SCHA works with its members to improve access, quality, and cost-effectiveness of health care for all South Carolinians. The state's hospitals and health care systems employ more than 70,000 persons statewide. For more information, visit www.scha.org.

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