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STATE RELEASES REPORT CARD
ON
HEART ATTACK CARE IN HOSPITALS

SACRAMENTO -- Today, the California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) released the results of its third California Hospital Outcomes study. The report provides comparative information on the performance of hospitals in caring for patients with heart attacks (Acute Myocardial Infarction or AMI).

Heart attacks are one of the leading causes of death in both California and the nation. Each year, approximately 40,000 heart attack patients are admitted to California hospitals with about 5,000 deaths. For these reasons, the state of California chose heart attack to be one of the first conditions studied in the Hospital Outcomes Project.

California is a leader in conducting studies such as this. Using data that hospitals are required to submit regularly to the state, OSHPD uses a risk-adjustment methodology to assess the quality of heart attack care provided by California Hospitals. Such reports should help patients in choosing a hospital and will help insurance carriers and HMOs in contracting with hospitals. "Perhaps most importantly, the hospitals and their medical and nursing staff can use this information their ongoing efforts to improve the quality of care," said OSHPD Director, Dr. David Werdegar.

The state's first report on heart attack care was published in December 1993 and the second report in May 1996. The new report studies heart attack cases from 1991 through 1993, using a refined methodology based on the results of a special validation study completed last year.

Using "risk-adjusted" measures of outcome to gauge hospital performance is a relatively new and rapidly developing field. The "expected" mortality rate for each hospital is calculated after treated. Each hospital's actual result is then compared with the expected rate. This enables the state to assign a performance rating to each hospital. The statistical analyses for the report were done by OSHPD in collaboration with a health services research team at UC Davis and UC San Francisco, led by Patrick Romano, M.D., and Hal Luft, Ph.D.

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California's Hospital Outcomes Project is the result of legislation (AB 524) signed by Governor Pete Wilson in 1991, in response to needs expressed by health care purchasers, providers and consumers to have publicly available information that objectively compares hospitals on factors other than price. The legislation called for the selection of medical, surgical and obstetrical conditions for study of outcomes of hospital care.

“The hospital response to this report has been positive and constructive,” said Werdegar. “Many hospitals have used the report to review their practices and procedures with a view to enhancing their own efforts to improve the quality of care. Furthermore, insurers, HMO managers, and consumer groups use the report in discussions with providers about ways to improve performance. These performance ratings based on outcomes of heart attack care provide valuable information about one aspect of hospital quality. While this report focuses on outcomes, other measures of health care quality – such as patient satisfaction – are also important.”

“our objective is to help Californians make informed decisions in the health care marketplace by providing objective information about the quality of hospital services available in their local communities,” Dr. Werdegar said.

The third Report on Heart Attack will be available on-line December 15, 1997, by accessing the following web address: www.oshpd.state.ca.us/hpp/chop.htm.