

The Society of Cardiovascular Patient Care Accreditation

Many hospitals are eager to earn accreditations or certifications for the services they provide to their patient populations. But not all hospitals understand the differences between accrediting bodies or the various forms of accreditation. As consumers of accreditation services, hospitals should take time to assess the extent of professional services offered by accrediting bodies and understand how they can capitalize on the accreditation investment they've made in terms of both process improvement and patient engagement.

One way to distinguish between accrediting bodies is to differentiate the services provided by each. Looking at another sector of commerce helps us draw a comparison to the world of accreditation. Take, for example, financial auditors and financial planners. The auditor ensures that financial reports are stated in accordance with accounting standards. The financial planner performs an altogether different service. The primary role of the financial planner is to consider the client's long-term goals and to help the client maximize their return on investment. So, while an auditor focuses on the credibility of financial statements, a financial planner analyzes and projects how an individual's investment practices align with their vision for future financial strength and stability.

Returning to the world of accreditation, there can be a very marked difference between the roles that two accrediting bodies play. Hospitals are wise to clearly differentiate between the services of accreditation providers in the same market space. They can choose between those accreditation organizations that simply validate whether or not a hospital is following accepted guidelines and if they "meet the mark," or they can call upon accreditation providers who act as navigators that help a facility establish its strategic goals.

While a simple audit of a hospital's care processes provides a check against conventional performance measures, it does not begin to address how variance of care can be avoided or provide the tools that lead to optimal delivery of cardiovascular patient care, improved financial

outcomes, and attainment of organizational goals. Hospitals that are interested in more than a 'pass/fail' assessment of their protocols and procedures should carefully analyze the approach of any accreditation provider and ask themselves how they intend to truly benefit from the accreditation experience. Accreditation, done thoughtfully, is less about a once-and-done project and more about an ongoing journey.

The accreditation experts at SCPC work collaboratively with hospitals to help hospital administrators and the clinical staff responsible for the care of cardiovascular patients consider how they can transform care processes and sustain quality improvement. Very different from accrediting bodies that review hospital metrics and score facilities, SCPC requires that multidisciplinary teams (including pre- and post-hospital providers) be organized and grants accreditations to facilities that implement and track sustainable quality improvement across time—improvement that is intended to continue long after a site visit is conducted.

The method utilized by SCPC requires that hospitals perform gap analysis, target areas in which variances exist, build action plans, and establish milestones—all in alignment with guideline-driven medical therapies, proven process improvement methodologies, and best practices. It's a transparent process that allows hospital data to tell the story of its current state while guiding hospital staff along a pathway that fosters change for the better. In essence, it hands the hospital a 3-year strategic plan that they can utilize as their roadmap to improved patient outcomes.

Just as in the world of financial planning, accomplishing a hospital's strategic objectives demands reliable resources, thoughtful collaboration, and knowledge of how performance influences outcomes. SCPC's accreditation programs are the result of the important work of many talented physicians, nurses, and educators. In addition, SCPC accreditation specialists are trained to act as coaches for their assigned hospital teams. Their constituents include diverse medical specialties such as EMS, emergency medicine, cardiology doctors and nurses, clinicians and administrators, quality improvement professionals, and others.

Every hospital that seeks SCPC accreditation can rest assured that each qualitative measure or mandatory item that is tracked through the accreditation process is aligned with the latest ACC/AHA Guidelines. Further, the essential components of each accreditation program are expressly intended to offer a consistent approach to the early

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assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of cardiovascular disease. Best practices and knowledge gained along the way are continually shared with those who seek accreditation so that each hospital can reach their long-term goals and remain on the path of continuous improvement. ■

ABOUT SCPC

The Society of Cardiovascular Patient Care is the accreditation services arm of the American College of Cardiology. SCPC accredited hospitals have some of the highest guidelines compliance and patient outcomes (associated with the lowest mortality), as well as some of the lowest readmission rates (associated with economic success) in the United States.

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