

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 1, 2009

For more information, contact:
Jennifer Trotter, Communications Manager
(505) 998-9898

Reducing Surgical Infections in New Mexico

Albuquerque, NM – In response to a Consumers Union April 23, 2009, report and Web site on reducing surgical infections (www.stophospitalinfections.org/infection_prevention/), the New Mexico Medical Review Association (NMMRA) reviewed data specific to New Mexico to determine how this state's rates compare to rates in other states. NMMRA also explored how the data compares to more recent data available as part of NMMRA's role as the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) for New Mexico. While recognizing that hospitals across the nation have significantly improved in adhering to practices that are proven to reduce surgical infections, the Consumers Union highlighted in its report areas where gaps in surgical care still exist. More recent data demonstrate that New Mexico hospitals are making significant strides in improving those surgical care measures that Consumers Union examined.

Analyzing [Hospital Compare](#) data, Consumers Union examined three Surgical Care Improvement Project (SCIP) quality measures identified by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) as key to decreasing the incidence of surgical infections:

- Patients given antibiotics within one hour before surgery
- Surgery patients given the appropriate antibiotic
- Discontinuing antibiotics within 24 hours after surgery

Consumers Union reports that for surgeries conducted between July 1, 2007, and June 30, 2008, the percentage of New Mexico patients (a total of 5,437) who received antibiotics within one hour before surgery is 85.8 percent. Rates among all other states range between 95.2 percent and 83 percent, placing New Mexico fourth to last in the country. The national average for this measure is 90.8 percent. However, New Mexico hospitals are improving. The most recent quarter of data available to NMMRA demonstrates that from July through September 2008 New Mexico surgery patients meeting this measure averaged 91.5 percent, an increase of 5.7 percentage points.

According to Consumers Union, New Mexico's rate of 95.6 percent is near the national average of 95.4 percent in the percentage of surgery patients who received appropriate antibiotics. The state

--more--

New Mexico Medical Review Association



was named as one of 22 states that had no individual hospital with a rate of less than 79 percent for this measure. State rates range between 98.4 percent and 91.2 percent. More recent data for New Mexico shows this measure slightly higher at 95.9 percent.

For the percentage of patients whose antibiotics were stopped within 24 hours after surgery, the New Mexico rate reported by Consumers Union is 86.2 percent. State rates ranged between 95.3 percent and 76.3 percent, with the national average at 87.1 percent. NMMRA reports that more recent data for this measure also show improvement, placing the state rate at 89.6 percent.

“New Mexico hospitals continue to work hard on improving their processes of care, including those for surgical patients,” said Carlene Brown, MPH, CPHQ, NMMRA project manager. “The majority of the hospitals in our state have developed systematic and standardized methods for administering antibiotics to prevent infections as a result of surgeries. We can now begin to see the evidence of this work in the improvements in these rates, though we still have more progress to make.”

NMMRA provides technical and professional guidance to hospitals in New Mexico in support of SCIP. Under its current [CMS QIO contract](#) and as part of the National Patient Safety Initiative, NMMRA is working intensely with select hospitals in New Mexico to improve quality indicators for surgical care, among others.

NMMRA is an Albuquerque-based, non-profit, physician-sponsored organization. Serving as a resource to the state's health care community and to Medicare beneficiaries, NMMRA seeks to fulfill its mission to facilitate demonstrable and continuous improvement in the quality of health care and achieve its vision to be a premier and innovative leader in improving health care. NMMRA has served continuously as the state's only federally contracted Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) since 1984. NMMRA also serves as the state's Medicaid External Quality Review Organization.

—30—

This material was prepared by NMMRA, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents presented do not necessarily reflect CMS policy. 9SOW-NM-PS-09-50