



NEWS RELEASE

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***Pathways* Tools Address Need for Patient Safety Efforts in Physician Practices**

Free online tools are firsts for outpatient settings

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (Jan. 19, 2009) – Physician practices now have free access to three new online resources to help improve patient safety. The Health Research and Educational Trust (HRET), the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) and the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) have released *Pathways for Patient Safety*[™], a series of Web-based tools aimed at increasing awareness, knowledge and implementation of best practices to reduce the risk of patient harm in physician practices. The *Pathways* tools can be downloaded for free at www.pathwaysforpatientsafety.org.

The free tools are instructive modules:

- **Working as a Team** – outlines actions required to build high-performing patient safety teams and techniques for effective communication among caregivers and with patients to reduce patient harm.
- **Assessing Where You Stand** – provides practical steps to minimize medical errors by assessing current patient-safety procedures, addressing practice culture and setting goals.
- **Creating Medication Safety** – describes factors practices should consider when implementing or augmenting a medication reconciliation process, and when prescribing or administering medications.

“Practice administrators are on the front lines of patient safety, because they are responsible for creating and implementing procedures that can help minimize medical errors and unwanted outcomes,” says William F. Jessee, MD, FACMPE, MGMA president and CEO. “The *Pathways* series is the first-of-its-kind tailor made resource for group practice leaders, designed to address patient safety across the physician office setting. We urge all medical practice professionals to download these tools and begin creating safety plans that work for their organizations.”

The modules in the *Pathways for Patient Safety* series were designed to be used either singly or as a set, depending on a practice’s needs. The modules combine step-by-step, instructions with templates and additional resources. Tool content is based on findings of a 2006 patient safety self-assessment of medical groups, input from an expert panel and feedback from a representative group of pilot practices that

reviewed the tools. Funding for development of the 2006 assessment and *Pathways* toolkit came from The Commonwealth Fund's Program on Health Care Quality Improvement and Efficiency.

"Medication safety is an essential part of patient safety, and the *Creating Medication Safety* module in the *Pathways* program will help all physician practices to assess their medication-related procedures and identify risk-reduction strategies," says Allen J. Vaida, PharmD, FASHP, executive vice president of ISMP.

The *Pathways for Patient Safety* series builds on an earlier effort by HRET, ISMP and MGMA. In 2006, the partners launched the Physician Practice Patient Safety Assessment® (PPPSA) (www.physiciansafetytool.org), a self-assessment tool that helps physician practices evaluate their patient safety processes and detect areas for improvement. The PPPSA covers 79 areas related to medication safety, patient handoffs and transitions, practice management and culture, and related topics. HRET, ISMP and MGMA conducted a national survey of 200 representative physician practices using the assessment as a survey instrument; the findings were used in the development of the *Pathways* tools.

"The *Pathways for Patient Safety* tools are particularly timely given the increasing complexity of care being provided in physician practices and the relative lack of patient safety resources tailored to this setting," said Maulik S. Joshi, DrPH, president of HRET.

The *Pathways for Patient Safety* tools also extend the work of another similar initiative focused on the hospital setting. The *2000 ISMP Medication Safety Self-Assessment®* for hospitals surveyed medication safety practices. Following that national survey, a series of tools — *Pathways for Medication Safety®* (www.medpathways.info) — were developed to help health care organizations take practical steps to improve medication safety practices. These tools have been referenced widely in trade and peer-reviewed literature and by organizations such as the National Patient Safety Foundation, the Joint Commission and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement.

Join HRET, MGMA and ISMP on Tuesday, Jan. 20, noon MT/1 p.m. CT/2 p.m. ET for a 60-minute Webinar providing a brief overview of the *Pathways for Patient Safety* tools. The presentation will conclude with a 15-minute question-and-answer session. Medical practice executives, administrators, physicians, clinical and nonclinical staff, and patient safety officers will benefit from this Webinar. Visit *Pathways for Patient Safety* (<http://www.mgma.com/solutions/landing.aspx?cid=22714&id1=25490&id2=1&id3=1&id4l=1&id4r=1&id5l=1&id5r=1&id6=1>) for more information and to register.

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About MGMA

MGMA is the premier membership association for professional administrators and leaders of medical group practices. Since 1926, MGMA has delivered networking, professional education and resources, and political advocacy for medical practice management. Today, MGMA's 22,500 members lead 13,700 organizations nationwide in which some 275,000 physicians provide more than 40 percent of the health care services delivered in the United States.

MGMA's mission is to continually improve the performance of medical group practice professionals and the organizations they represent. MGMA promotes the group practice model as the optimal framework for health care delivery, assisting group practices in providing efficient, safe, patient-focused and affordable care. MGMA is headquartered in Englewood, Colo., and maintains a government affairs office in Washington, D.C. Please visit mgma.com.

The Health Research and Educational Trust (HRET)

Founded in 1944, the Health Research and Educational Trust is a private, not-for-profit organization involved in research, education and demonstration programs addressing health management and policy issues. HRET, an American Hospital Association affiliate, collaborates with health care, government, academic, business and community organizations across the United States to conduct research and disseminate findings that shape the future of health care. Visit HRET's web site at www.hret.org.

The Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP)

The Institute for Safe Medication Practices is a nonprofit organization recognized worldwide as the premier education resource for understanding and preventing medication errors. ISMP represents more than 30 years of experience in helping keep patients safe, and continues to lead efforts to improve the medication use process. Working with health care practitioners and institutions, regulatory and accrediting agencies, consumers, professional organizations, the pharmaceutical industry, and others, ISMP also provides timely, accurate medication safety information to the healthcare community, policy makers, and the general public. For more information on ISMP, or to read more about its self-assessment tools and other resources on medication safety, visit the Institute's web site at www.ismp.org.

The Commonwealth Fund

The Commonwealth Fund is a private foundation that supports independent research on health and social issues and makes grants to improve health care practice and policy. The mission of The Commonwealth Fund is to promote a high performing health care system that achieves better access, improved quality, and greater efficiency, particularly for society's most vulnerable, including low-income people, the uninsured, minority Americans, young children, and elderly adults. To read or download publications, visit the Fund's web site at www.cmwf.org.