POLICY 19

Physician Peer Review

Peer review is essential to achieving quality of care, promoting patient safety and injecting value into the American healthcare system.

It is incumbent upon physicians to embrace peer review activities and to be familiar with standard metrics of care employed in this evaluative process.

Peer review should proceed by an established process and is guided by The Health Care Quality Improvement Act of 1986, (HCQIA), 42 USC,11101 et seq.

Physician peer review occurs when physicians review and critique the medical decision-making or other medical activities of other physicians who are in the same or similar specialty.

Reviews must be based on the applicable medical standard of care and directed by established standards of “best practice” or clinical practice guidelines.

Physicians who participate on peer review committees should have immunity from lawsuits that may arise from the review activities they have performed reasonably and in good faith. The information related to the peer review process is deemed confidential and the process should ensure the confidentiality of medical information revealed.

Peer review must be performed by licensed, credentialed and qualified practicing physicians who possess the appropriate clinical judgment based on their training, education and experience.

Physicians conducting peer review activities should be subject to the same licensing and regulatory control as clinical practitioners.

References:
National Network Accreditation Standards. The Utilization Review Accreditation Commission, April 1996.
American Medical Association website. Available at: www.ama-assn.org/Search/query.html?p=%TR=amasection%3A%22Ethics%22&TD=Ethics&qc=public+amnews+pubs8qt=medical+peer+review

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POLICY 20

Confidentiality of Peer Review Information

In order to evaluate adverse or potentially adverse events in health care or in the credentialing of health care personnel, discussions must be frank, open, and complete and must be undertaken in an environment that supports such discussions.

As long as peer review is performed in good faith by qualified experts, peer review deliberations, including information divulged either orally or in written form, must be confidential.

References:
DeAngelis, Thornton. Preserving Confidentiality in the Peer Review Process. JAMA, 2008; 291(16)

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Amendments adopted by the Board of Trustees, 2/17/10