south carolina hospitals are leading the nation in improving care for every patient

No other state in the country is working harder to improve health care than South Carolina. Because of the collaborative efforts of hospitals, physicians, insurers, state agencies, business leaders, and many others, South Carolina is now a national leader in improving heart attack care, infection prevention, surgical safety and birth outcomes.

- South Carolina has been ranked by the federal government as one of five states making the most improvements in the quality and safety of health care.
- In 2012, the South Carolina Hospital Association earned national recognition when it received the American Hospital Association’s Dick Davidson Milestone Award for Quality for exemplary leadership in improving health care.
- More recently, the federal government’s rankings of the top ten areas of the country for delivery of value-based care that directly links quality of care to Medicare reimbursement included three health care markets in South Carolina. The other seven on the national list were scattered across the country.
- South Carolina hospitals are proud to rank consistently among the top five states in patient engagement scores as measured by the federal government.

But we are just getting started.

south carolina’s triple aim platform

The South Carolina Hospital Association’s work to create a healthier South Carolina is based on a commitment to three aims.

The Triple Aim, as health care leaders often refer to these three interwoven goals, include:

1. to improve the health of the population,
2. to enhance the patient experience of care and
3. to control the cost of care.

SCHA led the effort to create the new South Carolina Health Coordinating Council. The Council’s mission is to achieve the highest rates of improvement in the nation toward the Triple Aim. Through membership on the Council, key South Carolina public and private stakeholder organizations have committed to align their own organizational goals and objectives with statewide goals.
Our efforts to improve health care are extensive; however, the following list briefly summarizes some of our key initiatives. For more information, contact SCHA.

**AccessHealth SC**
AccessHealth SC helps communities build coordinated networks of care so that low-income, at-risk people can receive needed medical and social services. The 10 SC networks consist of community partners that work together to increase access and quality of care. Working together benefits everyone. Networks demonstrate reductions in inpatient discharges (30%), emergency department discharges (20%), inpatient length of stay (16%), cost of care ($2.4 million), and health outcomes such as decreases in average blood sugar and blood pressure.

**Working Well**
Working Well is a statewide internal hospital campaign designed to create healthy workplaces by promoting tobacco-free lifestyles, healthy eating and physical activity. In 2012, the federal Community Transformation Grant awarded to the state allowed us to offer it to other employers, who can realize a 26 percent reduction in health care costs by implementing an employee wellness program.

**South Carolina Safe Care Commitment**
South Carolina hospitals are aiming to achieve the level of safety that “highly reliable” industries such as the airlines and nuclear energy plants have demonstrated. To begin that process, seven hospital systems including 20 facilities in South Carolina have made a SC Safe Care Commitment. Partnering with the Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare and SCHA, top leaders from these systems are participating in a multi-year commitment to improve the safety and quality of care for all patients. The ultimate goal is to replicate their success in other communities until every hospital in South Carolina is “highly reliable”.

**Preventing Avoidable Readmissions Together**
The South Carolina Partnership for Health includes BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, Health Sciences South Carolina and SCHA. The purpose is to join forces to pursue solutions to health issues in our state. The Partnership’s first initiative will focus on reducing avoidable readmissions to the hospital for patients with acute myocardial infarction, heart failure, pneumonia and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease by 20 percent by 2014. These results would impact an estimated 1,700 patients per year.

**Hospital Engagement Network – Partnership for Patients**
South Carolina hospitals are also participating in a federally-approved and federally-supported network of hospitals across the United States. The goal of the Hospital Engagement Networks (HEN) is to create a collaborative structure designed to reduce the number of avoidable readmissions and healthcare acquired conditions (HACs) in all participating hospitals.

**Infection Prevention**
Three years ago the chance of getting a central line infection while being treated in a South Carolina Hospital was greater than the national average. Today it is lower than the national average. In 2009 South Carolina was the only one of 17 states reporting hospital acquired infections to actually reduce our rate, according to the Centers of Disease Control. As mentioned before, South Carolina hospitals are part of a Hospital Engagement Network (HEN) working to reduce healthcare acquired conditions (HACs), as well as the number of avoidable readmissions, in all participating hospitals.

**Safe Surgery 2015**
After world renowned surgeon, writer, and quality expert Atul Gawande and his team demonstrated that Surgical Safety Checklists can reduce mistakes during surgery by 30 percent, he reached out to South Carolina hospitals to prove the checklist could be implemented statewide. All South Carolina hospitals responded to the call, and work is well underway. Results will be announced next year.
South Carolina’s Birth Outcomes Initiative
South Carolina’s Birth Outcomes initiative is a statewide public/private collaborative that seeks to improve outcomes for all mothers and babies in the state. Early successful efforts include a reduction in the number of elective deliveries prior to 39 weeks and many hospitals designating their facilities as Baby-Friendly to support the benefits of breastfeeding.

South Carolina Mission: Lifeline
South Carolina Mission: Lifeline improves our readiness and response time for heart attack patients. The goal is to swiftly open blocked arteries because every minute delayed means lost heart muscle. Over the past two years, South Carolina has reduced our statewide response time by more than 30 minutes, making the Palmetto State one of the top states for rapid treatment of heart attacks.

Hand Hygiene
Hand hygiene is closely related to reducing the spread of infections. Because 80 percent of infections are spread by dirty hands, SCHA developed an innovative education program to focus on proper hand hygiene techniques for hospital staff, health care providers and communities statewide.

Adoption of Electronic Health Records
Adoption of Electronic Health Records (EHR) will save $80 billion each year if 80 percent of the nation’s hospitals participate, according to the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research institution. In 2008, only nine percent of US hospitals had a basic EHR. That is changing. South Carolina’s Center for Information Technology Implementation Assistance, created by Health Sciences SC, has met its initial enrollment goal of 1,000 health care providers across the state as part of the national effort to accelerate the adoption of electronic health records. South Carolina is the second state in the nation to meet that enrollment goal.

Healthy Columbia
Healthy Columbia is the first step in the only planned, statewide demonstration in the nation on how to organize communities around health needs. This initiative is the brainchild of Harvard expert Dr. Marshall Gantz, who invited South Carolina to participate. In one zip code (29203) in Columbia, volunteers are being trained to do health screenings, provide health coaching, and build community gardens. Their approach will be replicated across the state.

Welvista
Welvista, a nonprofit organization, provides prescription medicine and pediatric dental services to uninsured persons in our state. Over the past 18 years, Welvista has supplied more than $150 million worth of free medications to more than 100,000 needy South Carolinians. It accomplishes this by partnering with pharmaceutical companies that donate medications and providers who help identify patients who need them but cannot afford them. South Carolina hospitals are proud of the role they are playing in the private-public partnership.

South Carolina has a tremendous history of successfully introducing other quality initiatives such as improving the care of heart attack patients and reducing infection. We would like to collaborate with South Carolina hospitals in developing a model to improve surgical safety at a state level that other U.S. states can follow.

Dr. Atul Gawande,
former head of the World Health Organization’s Safe Surgery initiative
check out what’s happening in your community

In addition to participating in these and other statewide efforts, South Carolina hospitals are also working every day to develop best practices for their facility that they will share with colleagues across the state. Developing electronic medical records, standardizing the medical devices and pharmaceuticals purchased to leverage group purchasing agreements, testing models for aligning physician and hospital incentives with the Triple Aim, and using the Lean process to improve and streamline processes to reduce costs and enhance reliability are just a few areas among the hundreds being addressed by hospitals.

To find out what is happening in your community to transform the way care is delivered, contact your local hospital and ask what they are doing to improve care, lower costs, and make the community healthier.

special thanks to our partners in these efforts

Collaboration is critical to our search for answers. SCHA appreciates the work of all organizations and individuals partnering with hospitals to create a healthy South Carolina.

American Cancer Society
American Heart Association
BlueCross Blue Shield of SC
Carolinias Center for Hospice and Palliative Care
The Carolinas Center for Medical Excellence
The Duke Endowment
Eat Smart, Move More SC
Every Patient Counts Alliance
Fullerton Foundation
Health Sciences South Carolina
The Joint Commission Center for Transforming Health
March of Dimes
Mothers Against Medical Error
NC Prevention Partners
Outcome Engenuity
PHT Services, Ltd.
Premier, Inc.
SC Chamber of Commerce
SC Chapter of AARP
SC Chapter of the American College of Cardiology
SC Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians
SC Chapter of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control
SC Department of Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse Services
SC Department of Health & Environmental Control
SC Department of Health & Human Services
SC Department of Mental Health
SC Free Clinic Association
SC Healthcare Alliance for Infection Prevention
SC Institute of Medicine and Public Health
SC Medical Association
SC Obstetrical and Gynecological Society
SC Office of Research and Statistics
SC Office of Rural Health
SC Primary Health Care Association
SC Voices for Patient Safety
United Way Association of SC
Welvista