



NEWS RELEASE

MGMA contact: Elizabeth Johnson (303) 799-1111, ext. 1347 (ej@mgma.com)
HRET contact: Jenna Rabideaux (312) 422-2640 (jrabideaux@aha.org)
ISMP contact: Renee Brehio (704) 321-3343 (rbrehio@ismp.org)
The Commonwealth Fund contact: Mary Mahon (212) 606-3853 (mm@cmwf.org)

Pathways Tools Address Need for Patient Safety Efforts in Physician Practices

Free online tools are first of their kind 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*TM, 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 accessed for free at www.pathwaysforpatientsafety.org.

The free tools include:

- Working as a Team – outlines actions required for building high-performing patient safety teams and techniques for effective communications among caregivers and with patients to reduce patient harm.
- Assessing Where You Stand – provides practical steps toward minimizing 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 that may be harmful to patients.

“Practice administrators are on the frontlines in their responsibility for creating and implementing the patient safety procedures within group practices that can help minimize medical errors and unwanted outcomes,” said William F. Jessee, MD, FACMPE, MGMA president and CEO. “The *Pathways* series is the first-of-its-kind tailor made resource for practice leaders, and is designed to address patient safety across multiple facets of the physician office setting. We urge all medical practice professionals to take this opportunity to download these tools and begin creating a safety plan that works for their practice.”

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

assessment and *Pathways* toolkit was funded through 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* tools will help all physician practices to assess their current medication-related procedures and identify risk reduction strategies,” says Allen J. Vaida, PharmD, FASHP, Executive Vice President of ISMP. “The *Pathways* tools are designed as practical, easy-to-use resources that can help practices make proactive, system-based improvements in their overall safety plan.”

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 other related topics. HRET, ISMP, and MGMA conducted a national survey of 200 representatives' physician practices using the assessment as a survey instrument; the findings of this survey 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 hospitals on their medication safety practices. Following that national survey, a series of tools—*Pathways for Medication Safety®* (www.medpathways.info)—were developed to help healthcare organizations take practical steps to improve medication safety practices at their facility. The *Pathways for Medication Safety* 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, January 20, Noon MT/1:00 CT/2:00 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 non-clinical staff, and patient safety officers will benefit from this webinar. Visit <http://www.mgma.com/pd/calendar.aspx> for more information and to register.

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The Medical Group Management Association (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 21,500 members lead 13,500 organizations nationwide in which some 270,000 physicians provide as much as 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.

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.cmf.org.