

# AMBULATORY SURGERY CENTERS: A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY



## BACKGROUND

Ambulatory Surgery Centers—known as ASCs—are modern health care facilities focused on providing same-day surgical care, including diagnostic and preventive procedures.

ASCs have transformed the outpatient experience for millions of Americans by providing them with a more convenient alternative to hospital-based outpatient procedures—and done so with a strong track-record of quality care and positive patient outcomes.

## UNIFORM APPROACH TO QUALITY

- ▶ Quality care has been a hallmark of the ASC community since its earliest days. One example of the ASC community's commitment to quality care is the ASC Quality Collaboration, an independent initiative that was established voluntarily by the ASC community to promote quality and safety in ASCs.
- ▶ The ASC Quality Collaboration is committed to developing meaningful quality measures for the ASC setting. Six of those measures have already been endorsed by the National Quality Forum (NQF). The NQF is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of health care in America, and the entity the Medicare program consults when seeking consensus measurement of quality care. More than 20 percent of all ASCs are already voluntarily reporting the results of the ASC measures NQF has endorsed.
- ▶ The ASC Quality Collaboration also provides infection control tool kits to ASCs. The kits cover an extensive range of topics including hand hygiene, safe injection practices, point-of-care devices, environmental infection prevention, single-use device reprocessing, endoscope reprocessing, sterilization and high-level disinfection.
- ▶ For the past five years, the ASC industry has been urging CMS to establish a uniform quality reporting system to allow all ASCs to publicly demonstrate their performance on quality measures.

## PATIENT FOCUSED SURGICAL CARE

- ▶ The ASC model provides the optimal opportunity for physicians and the other health care professionals who provide care in the ASC to focus on patients and quality care.
- ▶ By operating in an ASC setting, physicians are able to exercise greater control over the surgical experience than in hospital settings.
- ▶ ASCs differ from hospitals in their ability to focus on a specialized number of surgical procedures. This allows physicians to design an environment that optimizes their ability to provide a high-quality patient-centered surgical experience.

## INFECTION PREVENTION PRACTICES

- ▶ ASCs have an excellent track record of providing safe patient care. On average, ASCs experience only one surgical site infection per 1,000 patients in the 30-day period immediately following surgery.
- ▶ ASCs maintain anti-infection programs based on the protocols established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other nationally and internationally recognized infection control guidelines, including recommendations provided by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).
- ▶ Medicare requires ASCs to have extensive staff protocols in place to reinforce the importance of maintaining infection prevention practices and a sanitary environment.
- ▶ All Medicare-certified ASCs must comply with an extensive set of infection prevention standards that are monitored internally at each ASC daily and evaluated by external inspectors trained in the use of a rigorous, detailed infection prevention survey tool.

## ASC CERTIFICATION, ACCREDITATION AND LICENSURE

- ▶ ASCs are regulated in many ways. Most provide care to Medicare beneficiaries and, thus, must meet Medicare standards approved by the federal government.
- ▶ In virtually every state, ASCs must meet specific requirements and obtain a state license.
- ▶ To obtain Medicare certification, and usually to obtain a state license, an ASC must have an inspection conducted by a state official or a representative of an organization that the government has authorized to conduct that inspection.
- ▶ Many ASCs seek an additional level of approval by obtaining accreditation from one of four accrediting bodies approved by Medicare. All accredited ASCs must meet specific standards that are evaluated during on-site inspections.
- ▶ In 2002, the Ambulatory Surgery Center Association (ASCA) initiated the CASC (Certified Administrator Surgery Center) credential, the only ASC-specific credential available today. That credential recognizes achievement in mastering the unique multi-dimensional skill set ASC administrators need to effectively manage an ASC.
- ▶ The ASCA also assists ASCs in meeting quality standards by conducting numerous educational programs and operating a nationwide outcomes monitoring project.