

Contact: Priscilla Koutsouradis
Delaware Valley Healthcare Council of HAP
215-575-3743
priscillak@dvhc.org

Ruth Stoolman
Independence Blue Cross
215-241-4807
Ruth.Stoolman@ibx.com

INDEPENDENCE BLUE CROSS EXTENDS FUNDING TO ENHANCE PATIENT SAFETY AT AREA HOSPITALS

Commitment of \$3 million through 2011 to the Partnership for Patient Care will help to prevent infections and medical errors, improve care

Philadelphia, PA –December 16, 2008 — Independence Blue Cross announced today that it will extend its support for the Partnership for Patient Care, a quality and patient safety effort led by southeastern Pennsylvania hospitals, with funding of \$3 million through 2011. The funding will be provided to the Health Care Improvement Foundation, a nonprofit health and safety organization that oversees the Partnership’s projects. Matching funds will be raised from the hospital community in 2009, reflecting the Partnership’s broad-based commitment to accelerating the implementation of evidence-based clinical practices.

Launched in 2006 with IBC’s three-year financial support of \$1.25 million, the Partnership initially focused on the prevention of hospital-acquired infections. Nearly every area hospital has participated in a number of Partnership initiatives that promote the use of evidence-based best practices to improve the quality and safety of health care in our region. In addition, a 2003 hospital effort supported by IBC, to improve medication safety at area hospitals, became a nationally recognized model for enhancing the quality of patient care.

“I congratulate IBC for once again showing its strong commitment to working with hospitals on making our region one of the safest places in the country to receive care,” said Kate Flynn, president of the Health Care Improvement Foundation. “We are looking forward to the continued progress and success of the Partnership for Patient Care on future projects that tackle many of our region’s most vital health care concerns.”

“The Partnership for Patient Care unites health care professionals with a common goal to make health care safer for everybody. It also reaffirms the fact that when many different stakeholders work together as one the quality of care for all can only improve,” said Joseph A. Frick, Independence Blue Cross president and chief executive officer. “We are convinced this initiative will continue to provide our members with access to the highest level of care and we are proud to be a catalyst for these improvements. We also commend our hospital partners for their meaningful and collaborative participation in an effort that addresses serious threats to people’s health.”

Since the Partnership began, its projects have:

- improved adoption of processes that prevent surgical site infections, such as increased control of blood sugar levels in patients about to undergo surgery and optimized use of antibiotics before and after surgery;
- implemented best practices for the prevention of central line associated blood infections;
- helped prevent life-threatening blood clots that can develop during hospitalization;
- improved the prevention of patient falls and initiated region-wide standardization of falls reporting;
- enhanced monitoring of medications to prevent harmful drug interactions and dosing errors; and

- raised awareness about the threat of MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) through the Fight MRSA! Alliance.

The Partnership is currently working on several projects, including preventing pressure ulcers and continuing to raise awareness about antibiotic-resistant staph infections through a new campaign called Students Fight MRSA.

Future initiatives will be centered on helping hospitals foster “high reliability” health care – the consistent delivery of safe, high-quality care that delivers the best possible experience for all patients. With this data-driven, behavioral science-informed approach, hospitals undergo rigorous, individualized analyses to identify patterns of weakness or vulnerability in their safety performance. These assessments detect the underlying factors limiting performance and suggest the most appropriate ways to address them.

Depending on the nature of the problem, safety improvements could take many forms, including staff education, new equipment or technology, revised safety practices, or enhanced measurement and accountability. Through this process, hospitals will develop long-term cultural and systemic changes to assure safety, rather than focusing on short-term initiatives that target narrow issues.

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About Independence Blue Cross

Independence Blue Cross is a leading health insurer in southeastern Pennsylvania. IBC and its affiliates provide coverage to nearly 3.4 million people. For 70 years, Independence Blue Cross has offered high-quality health care coverage tailored to meet the changing needs of members, employers, and health care professionals. Independence Blue Cross is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans. For more information, visit our website at www.ibx.com.

About The Health Care Improvement Foundation

The Health Care Improvement Foundation (HCIF) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation dedicated to building partnerships for better health care in southeastern Pennsylvania. With a multi-dimensional focus on health care safety – in patient care, environmental practices, and disaster preparedness – HCIF brings together diverse organizations to achieve regional collaboration and improvement.