

August 21, 2015

Gail Vasterling
Director
Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
Box 570
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0570

Dear Director Vasterling:

On March 23, 2015, the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services implemented the state's new stroke regulations and stroke data registry. In the department's own words, this program is designed to "... provide a quicker response and higher quality care when a time critical emergency happens." We agree with this premise and support the effort to integrate and coordinate 911 response, ambulance services and hospitals to support better care and survival rates for those in need of treatment for medical emergencies.

Since implemented, our individual organizations have shared with your department on numerous occasions issues that have arisen since the effective date of the regulation of this program. Some issues have been resolved. Others appear to require more extensive discussion, such as the use of telemedicine and the burdensome CME requirements that have been placed on Missouri emergency physicians. To that end, we ask that DHSS convene the Time Critical Diagnosis Advisory Committee to discuss and evaluate the need to amend the rules to resolve these issues.

In addition, there are three issues requiring immediate action by DHSS.

- Unfortunately, the system is not ready. It is not able to accept data from stroke registries such as the American Heart Association's *Get With The Guidelines* registry (as was the department's intent as indicated by its comments published with the final rule) without extensive manual edits. It requires submission of data elements not required by rule and excludes others required by rule. In addition, the system lacks standardized data definitions. This means that even with resource-intensive data entry, the system will not be able to furnish results in a consistent manner and thus fails to provide necessary information for performance improvement and regional outcome review required by the regulation. We recommend that DHSS immediately suspend data entry requirements until registry problems are resolved.
- The state regulation governing fencing around helipads used by stroke centers has in one instance resulted in a near miss landing accident. We understand that the fencing requirement may be inconsistent with federal aviation guidelines. To protect patients and caregivers, we urge DHSS to immediately notify hospitals not to cordon off helipads without first consulting with local EMS providers. We also ask the department take action as needed to issue an emergency rule to adjust the Code of State Regulations accordingly.

Gail Vasterling

August 21, 2015

Page 2

- Finally, the DHSS stroke regulation requires data reporting to be coded in the ICD-9 format. As you know, on Oct. 1, the nation converts to ICD-10. DHSS' sister agency, MO HealthNet, has long recognized this cutover and will require all health care providers in the state to submit all Medicaid claims in ICD-10 format. But, the stroke program will continue to require providers to use the soon-to-be-retired ICD-9 format. This means health care organizations will need to maintain two different sets of codes which is duplicative, expensive and results in unnecessary staffing and compliance. We ask that DHSS waive implementation of ICD-9 and seek an emergency rule to reflect this imminent change in coding standards.

The designers of the Time Critical Diagnosis System envisioned a system that would have the ability to grow and integrate future insights, technology and best practices and utilize the information from the registry to drive improvements in access, response, care coordination and treatment of stroke and STEMI patients. There is concern that the TCD system as implemented by DHSS has not always been consistent with the intent of the original designers. Therefore, we also would like to suggest the development of medical oversight (by experts outside of DHSS) so that questions of interpretation and evolving standards of care can be addressed.

We share that vision and look forward to continuing to collaborate with the department to make it a reality.

Sincerely,



Jace Smith

Government Relations Director - Missouri
American Heart Association



Brad Mason

MARCER Chair
Mid-America Regional Council Emergency
Rescue Committee



Brian Bowles

Executive Director

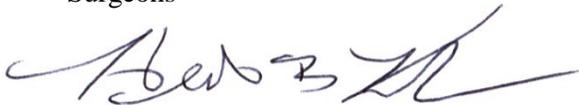
Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians &
Surgeons



Douglas Char, MD

President

Missouri College of Emergency Physicians



Herb B. Kuhn

President and Chief Executive Officer
Missouri Hospital Association



Tom Holloway

Executive Vice President

Missouri State Medical Association



Nick Gragnani

Executive Director

St. Louis Area Regional Response System