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New ACHC Stroke Care Certification Standards Empower Hospitals to Define Needs-Based Practices
Programs provide flexibility to drive innovation, high-quality patient care

CARY, N.C. (May 20, 2024) – Accreditation Commission for Health Care, Inc. (ACHC), released its revised manuals for Stroke Care Certification to reflect current standards of practice, improve relevance, clarity and flow, and reduce redundancy. The revised standards provide more flexibility for stroke centers. Revisions affect Stroke Ready, Primary Stroke, Thrombectomy and Comprehensive Stroke Programs, and align with current guidelines from leading national stroke organizations, including the American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association.

The standards updates include minor changes, such as improving clarity of intent, along with more substantial revisions, like providing latitude for hospitals to define program goals. For example, while tracking performance against established performance metrics, hospitals may now define more time frames associated with treatment and case volume expectations for providers.

“We believe that excellence is derived from collaboration,” said Patrick Horine, vice president of Acute Care Services for ACHC. “We are proud to work with and empower our healthcare partners to define individualized best-practices while upholding ACHC Certification standards for continuous improvement in patient care and outcomes.”

The updated standards will take effect for surveys conducted on or after August 8, 2024, for all ACHC certified stroke centers seeking renewal and all acute care facilities seeking their first stroke certification.

Additional notable changes, specifically related to providing hospitals with more flexibility to implement requirements effectively, include:

- Elimination of specific case volume requirements in favor of the hospital identifying these or using other means of establishing current competency of its providers.
- Hospital-defined time frames for:
 - Transfer to other stroke centers, to meet patient needs based on acuity.
 - Initiation of the multidisciplinary plan of care.
 - Selected time-sensitive performance measures.

“Updates to the stroke certification standards reflect ACHC’s ongoing dedication to efficiency and innovation,” said Horine. “Improving standards of care for stroke treatment and intervention is critical, as stroke-related deaths are increasing year over year.* We are committed to utilizing survey data and research to better equip healthcare providers to treat, and hopefully prevent, stroke events.”

For more information about stroke center certifications (Stroke Ready, Primary Stroke, Thrombectomy Stroke, Comprehensive Stroke), visit <https://www.achc.org/stroke-certification/>.

*Cantú-Brito, C., & García-Grimshaw, M. (2023). A Potential Forecast for Ischemic Stroke Burden in 2030: Are We There Yet? *Neurology*, 10.1212/WNL.0000000000207517 May 17, 2023. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1212/WNL.0000000000207517>.
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