



NEW PRESIDENT NAMED AT THE JOINT COMMISSION

by Dave Gourley RRT

The Board of Commissioners of The Joint Commission announced the appointment of their next President on August 1, 2007. Mark R. Chassin, MD, MPP, MPH will become President on January 1, 2008, replacing current President, Dennis S. O'Leary, MD.

Dr. Chassin is the Edmond A. Guggenheim Professor of Health Policy and Chairman of the Department of Health Policy at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York, and Executive Vice President for Excellence in Patient Care at The Mount Sinai Medical Center. Dr. Chassin previously served as Commissioner of the New York State Department of Health. He is a board-certified internist and practiced emergency medicine for 12 years. He has served in both the public and private sector, working in health services and health policy research. He is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences and was the Co-chairman of the Institute of Medicine's Roundtable on Health Care Quality.

Dr. Chassin's achievements include development of a nationally recognized quality improvement program at The Mount Sinai Medical Center, which achieved significant gains in all aspects of quality of care, including safety, clinical outcomes, patient/family experiences, and the working environment of caregivers. He also was responsible for initiating Six Sigma quality improvement methods to enhance patient safety and efficiency. Dr. Chassin's most recent research efforts at Mount Sinai were focused on reducing racial and ethnic disparities in health care.

David L. Nahrwold, MD, Chairman of The Joint Commission Board of Commissioners stated, "Mark Chassin is a leading force in patient safety and quality. The Board has the utmost confidence in his ability to lead The Joint Commission with intelligence and vision as the organization continues its mission to continuously improve the safety and quality care provided to the public."

Dr. Chassin will replace Dennis S. O'Leary MD, who has been President for the past 21 years. He gained national attention for his role as hospital spokesman at George Washington University Medical Center following the assassination attempt on President Reagan in March 1981. Dr. O'Leary has presided over significant changes at The Joint Commission during his tenure. The survey process was transformed to focus on actual performance of the provision of care, including new standards related to patient safety, pain management, use of patient restraints, and emergency preparedness. In addition to the survey process, he directed the launching of public policy initiatives addressing such issues as the nurse staffing crisis, emergency preparedness, organ donation,

patient safety and the tort system. The Commission also expanded internationally and quadrupled in size during his tenure.

Dr. O'Leary noted that "Mark Chassin is a superb choice to guide The Joint Commission into the future. His wealth of knowledge and experience in health care and his personal priority for patient safety and health care quality portend a smooth and seamless leadership transition for this organization."

"I am very excited about the opportunity to lead The Joint Commission because of my life-long passion for quality improvement and patient safety," stated Dr. Chassin. "The Joint Commission is transforming health care through its accreditation process and other programs to help health care organizations provide safe, high quality care for all Americans. I look forward to working with Dennis O'Leary to ensure a smooth transition. He has provided outstanding leadership to The Joint Commission for so many years."

In an interview from The Joint Commission Perspectives, Dr. Chassin notes that the biggest challenge and opportunity for The Joint Commission is to build on the momentum of demands for major improvements to bring about real change in patient outcomes. He said that accreditation is vital to improvement, but it is not sufficient by itself. He would like to move beyond measurement and accreditation to facilitate that improvement in quality and safety in all accredited organizations. He noted that additional and better measures of quality are needed to address a wider spectrum of health care. Dr. Chassin stated, "In that development process, however, we must never lose sight of the absolute necessity to be as sure as we can that improvement on those measures will translate directly into improved outcomes for patients."

The change in leadership at The Joint Commission will be followed closely by the health care community. As the largest health care accreditation organization, The Joint Commission affects all aspects of the health care delivery system. Dr. Chassin will be faced with the top issues of quality, patient safety, transparency, and health care finance challenges. Further information on Dr. Chassin and The Joint Commission may be obtained at The Joint Commission website, www.JointCommission.org.

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