

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Accreditation: NEW JCAHO CERTIFICATION PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR SPECIAL CARE PROGRAMS

Does your nursing facility have a cutting edge dementia care, pain management or other type of chronic disease management program? Such programs are now eligible for certification by the **Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations**.

The certification program, which JCAHO launched in February, is available to any chronic disease management program that wants to differentiate itself in the marketplace as a center of excellence, according to **Donna Christopher**, associate director of the disease-specific care certification program.

The certification program has special implications for facilities with a dementia care unit, now that JCAHO is integrating the dementia special care unit standards into the general long-term care setting (see Long-Term Care Survey Alert , Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 5).

"Since the dementia standard intent statements now apply to all residents with dementia regardless of where they live in the nursing home, the Joint Commission no longer awards a special accreditation certificate for dementia special care units," notes **Marianna Kern Grachek**, executive director of JCAHO's long-term care and assisted living accreditation services. "As a result, JCAHO decided there should be a mechanism to provide special recognition to dementia settings that wanted to specialize in dementia," Grachek says.

Any provider specializing in dementia care can apply for the certification, including a nursing home or assisted living community, or even a geriatric assessment clinic specializing in dementia services. In addition, disease specific certification is not contingent on or dependent on accreditation, Grachek stresses.

To be eligible for certification, a chronic disease management program must be comprehensive, interdisciplinary and include self-management education for patients or their caregivers.

In addition, the appropriate specialty physician must be involved in the interdisciplinary collaboration if the patient has an overlying or underlying condition or disease.

Christopher says the disease certification program will be working with the accreditation arm of JCAHO to prevent overlap. "For example, accreditation of a long-term care facility would be looking at how the management supports the specialty services while we'd be looking at the actual clinical improvements and outcomes," of the disease management program, she tells **Eli**.

Providers have mixed feelings about the new opportunity. "The concept of what JCAHO does in terms of the systems and programs required is excellent and they work in a collaborative way with providers," comments **Debbie Greiner**, director of Alzheimer's Disease services at **Whitehall North** in Deerfield, IL. Yet, in her view, sometimes the paper proof required by JCAHO can ironically take time away from residents.