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Organizations Release New Tools For Reducing Medication Errors

ATLANTA – Pathways for Medication Safety, a coordinated and comprehensive set of tools designed to reduce medication errors, was released today at the 37th American Society of Health-System Pharmacists Midyear Clinical Meeting. The tools were developed by the American Hospital Association, the Health Research and Educational Trust (HRET) and the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) with the generous support of The Commonwealth Fund.

Pathways is designed to help hospitals take a process-driven, system-based approach to address a critical issue in health care today: medication errors and the harm that can result from them.

“Many hospitals have increased the energy and attention to preventing medical errors but more structured and rigorous approaches are needed to establish systems that prevent threatening medication errors. These tools go a long way toward helping hospitals and their staff do that,” said Mary Pittman, president, HRET.

Pathways includes three tools: *Leading a Strategic Planning Effort*, *Looking Collectively At Risk* and *Assessing Bedside Bar-Coding*. Organized in a modular format to suit different

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organizations and professionals, the three main Pathways components will help hospital leaders and professionals:

- 1) incorporate medication safety into the organization's strategic plan;
- 2) identify specific error-prone processes and devise safe alternatives using a process flow diagram, case scenarios and the ISMP's Ten Key Elements of Medication Use System; and
- 3) prepare to implement a bedside bar-coding system for administering medications.

Allen J. Vaida, executive director, ISMP explains that, "These three tools were selected based on system weaknesses that were identified through the *ISMP Medication Safety Self Assessment*TM in which more than 1,400 hospitals participated."

Organizations at various points on the medication safety continuum can select tools that are most relevant to them. And different professionals can focus on the sections that are customized for their perspectives. The content for the tools were informed by a multidisciplinary panel of safety experts, best practices from the field, evaluation by 24 hospitals representing different hospital sizes across the U.S., and various literature reviews on the topic.

"The three tools of Pathways for Medication Safety are state-of-the-art educational materials. They represent a unique resource that will guide users to the best medication safety tools currently available, said Anne-Marie Audet, MD, assistant vice president, The Commonwealth Fund. "The tools are easy to use and can be put into action today, by teams of health care professionals, who are actively engaged in making their work environment as safe as it can be for the public they serve."

About AHA

The American Hospital Association (AHA) is a nonprofit association of health care provider organizations and individuals that are committed to the health improvement of their

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communities. The AHA is the national advocate for its members, which includes 4600 hospitals, health systems, networks and other providers of care and 37,0000 individual members. Founded in 1898, the AHA provides education for health care leaders and is a source of information on health care issues and trends.

About HRET

The Health Research and Educational Trust is a private, nonprofit affiliate of the AHA devoted to research, education, and demonstrating programs addressing health management and policy issues. HRET collaborates with health care, government, business and community organizations across the United States to conduct research and disseminate findings that will shape the future of health care.

About ISMP

The Institute for Safe Medication Practices is a nonprofit organization that works closely with practitioners, regulatory agencies, health care institutions, professional organizations and the pharmaceutical industry to provide education about adverse drug events and their prevention. The ISMP is a national resource for all matters pertaining to safe medication practices in health care organizations.

About Commonwealth

The Commonwealth Fund is a private foundation supporting independent research on health and social issues.

Pathways for Medication Safety is available free of charge at www.medpathways.info. For more information about Pathways for Medication Safety, contact:

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