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Sepsis Campaign Seeks to Raise Awareness of Warning Signs, Treatment Protocols

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Sepsis Awareness Month has just passed and IPRO, leader of the Atlantic Quality Innovation Network (AQIN), is engaged in a two-year, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) funded sepsis awareness project. The project targets healthcare professionals, physician office staff and

members of the public within the Hospital Referral Regions (HRRs) of Albany and Syracuse.

Sepsis has a 17% inpatient hospitalization mortality rate in New York, and we seek to lower this rate through educating patients and their caregivers as well as healthcare professionals. Eighty percent of sepsis cases occur in the community, so we are investing most of our resources in educating community based professionals and pre-hospital providers, as well as members of the public.

The project has already made an impact. Using a "train the trainer" model, more than 4,200 clinical and non-clinical skilled nursing facility and home health agency staff have been educated so far. At one facility, after being trained, a certified nursing assistant recognized the signs of sepsis in her 17-year-old daughter, who was already being treated for an infection that rapidly worsened despite the administration of antibiotics. The sepsis awareness project has the potential to save many lives, including the life of this young woman.

A key component of this campaign is to educate direct care staff at physician practices, who have initial contact with at-risk patients. Those patients most at risk include the elderly and those with weakened or compromised immune systems; those with chronic diseases including diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS, kidney or liver disease; as well as those who've experienced recent physical trauma.

We are offering free staff training to community based providers in the HRRs of Albany and Syracuse.

We have also been engaged in a large-scale public awareness campaign. As a result, patients may call their physicians seeking more information.

Our project website, www.stopsepsisnow.org, has a wealth of information for both healthcare professionals and nonprofessionals alike. One resource on the site is the recording of a webinar, led by infectious disease specialist Alan Sanders, MD, on sepsis early recognition and treatment protocols; a review of the Third International Consensus Definitions for Sepsis and Septic Shock (2016); an overview of patient groups at increased risk for sepsis; and common diseases presenting in outpatient settings that have the potential to progress to sepsis. The site also includes a downloadable one-page Rapid Assessment Tool to help providers quickly identify likely cases of sepsis, and a concise Patient Education Tool. The site contains additional useful resources, as do the websites of our project partners, the Sepsis Alliance (www.sepsis.org) and the Rory Staunton Foundation for Sepsis Prevention (www.rorystauntonfoundationforsepsis.org).

For more information on this project, please contact Quality Improvement Specialist Eve Bankert MT (ASCP) at (518) 320-3552 or Eve.Bankert@area-I.hcqis.org.

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