



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Health Care Leaders Focus on Patient-Centered Care**  
***Baucus health care reform bill recognizes patient-centered approaches are fundamental to safe, quality care***

Derby, Conn., October 1, 2009—As the nation focuses on the future of health care in U.S. hospitals, VA Medical Centers and health care organizations around the country will join Planetree this October to spotlight patient-centered approaches to health care by commemorating the third annual Patient-Centered Care Awareness Month. The growing recognition that patient-centered approaches to care are fundamental to safe, quality care was recently reinforced by both the inclusion of specific reference to it in the Baucus health care reform bill currently being debated in the United States Senate, and in Secretary for Veteran’s Affairs Shinseki’s championing of veteran-centered care and the incorporation of many of the Planetree model components as a means of transforming the care being delivered to our veterans.

Additionally, in 2009 HCAHPS patient satisfaction data became publicly available at [www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov](http://www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov) providing consumers with a resource to compare hospitals not only based on clinical capabilities, but also on important aspects of the patient experience. When patients report their interactions with nurses and physicians are respectful, that information is provided to them in a way that is easy to understand and that the hospital’s physical environment is conducive to healing, optimal care can be delivered.

These connections between a patient-centered approach to care and health care quality have been emphasized by the Institute of Medicine, which in 2001 identified patient-centeredness as one of six national aims of a quality healthcare system.

“At a time when we are collectively considering the future of health care, we can all agree on the importance of a quality health care system,” said Susan Frampton, president of Planetree. “Patient-centered care is fundamental to that aim. During Patient-Centered Care Awareness Month, we challenge healthcare providers and consumers alike to consider ways to more effectively invite patients’ participation in their own care and to strengthen the partnerships that develop between patients, caregivers and family members.”

Patient-Centered Care Awareness Month is sponsored and coordinated by Planetree, Inc., a not-for-profit organization based in Derby, Connecticut, partnering with health care organizations to advance innovative models of health care that focus on healing and nurturing body, mind and spirit. Many patient-centered hospitals across the U.S. as well as the Society for Healthcare Consumer Advocacy are planning events to increase awareness about their initiatives to improve the patient experience and encourage other organizations to do the same.

Several activities are planned to increase awareness about the patient-centered model of care, empower patients and inspire health care organizations to further advance and expand the practice. Highlights of the month's activities include:

- Governors from across the U.S. are commemorating the event by signing proclamations recognizing Patient-Centered Care Awareness Month in their state
- In partnership with the Picker Institute, Planetree has launched the Web site, [www.patient-centeredcare.org](http://www.patient-centeredcare.org) showcasing the *Patient-Centered Care Improvement Guide* that provides a self-assessment and valuable, easy-to-follow strategies and tools to implement patient-centered approaches.
- The recognition of individual health care professionals for their personal embodiment of the values of patient-centered care at the annual Spirit of Planetree Awards Dinner on October 7 concluding the 2009 Planetree Annual Conference
- Hospitals nationwide are displaying proclamations to publicly declare their commitment to the values of patient-centered care, among them that “a patient is an individual to be cared for, not just a medical condition to be treated” and “each staff member is a caregiver, whose role is to meet the needs of each patient.”
- Hospitals are coordinating a variety of events as well as distributing “I Am An Expert About Me” stickers to patients, and staff members are wearing “I Am Listening” stickers.

In addition to providing expertise and resources to health care leaders, Planetree provides consumers with information on its Web site, [www.planetree.org](http://www.planetree.org), including a list of Planetree hospitals by state along with a [list of questions to ask when choosing a hospital](#). Among the key practices that patients and family members would expect to find in a patient-centered hospital include non-restrictive visiting, processes for proactively sharing medical information with patients and ongoing opportunities for patient and family input into hospital practices.

About Planetree:

Founded in 1978 by a San Francisco patient who endured a traumatic hospitalization, Planetree has been at the forefront of the effort to personalize, humanize and demystify the health care system for three decades. Today, the Planetree membership network is a global community of acute care hospitals, continuing care facilities, and outpatient clinics, each at various phases of the journey to transform their health care by considering every aspect of the health care experience from the perspective of their patients, and reconnecting staff to their passion for caring for others. A complete list of Planetree hospitals is available at [www.planetree.org](http://www.planetree.org).

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