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API HEALTHCARE ISSUES PATIENT CHECK LIST:

FIVE THINGS EVERY PATIENT SHOULD KNOW BEFORE BEING ADMITTED TO THE HOSPITAL

HARTFORD, WI—JULY 14, 2010—[API Healthcare](#), the leader in healthcare-specific workforce management technology solutions, today released a list of five important check-list items that everyone should consider before a hospital admission.

“Patients need to be aware of all the changes taking place in the healthcare system and how those changes can impact their care,” said API Healthcare chief executive officer, J.P. Fingado. “Some hospitals under pressure to reduce costs are cutting back on labor, which can impact the quality of care. As nurses are required to care for higher numbers of more critically ill patients, hospital executives will need to focus on optimizing their talent pool to deliver high-quality care in a cost-effective way. Patients should understand how their hospital is addressing this challenge.”

Nurses are responsible for providing the majority of direct care to patients, but many hospitals have cut back on staffing levels during the recession. As a result, more attention is being given to safe nurse-to-patient ratios – a factor that contributed to the recent nursing strike in Minnesota. Yet, as healthcare reform is expected to bring 32 million new patients into the system, and nurses leave due to retirement, burnout and attrition, industry experts are expecting a critical shortage of nurses in the near future.

“Nurses play a significant role in ensuring high-quality patient care and can impact patient outcomes,” said nursing expert, Kathy Malloch, PhD, MBA, RN, FAAN. “Patients have a right to know who will be providing their care and how their care team will work together to manage their specific needs.”

Studies have shown that hospitals that commit to high-quality nursing care have lower mortality rates, fewer readmissions and shorter stays. API Healthcare recommends that patients consider the following before a hospital stay:

1. HOW SATISFIED ARE THE NURSES ON STAFF?

Nurse satisfaction and turnover rates are important indicators of the quality of nursing care at a hospital. Flexible scheduling and nurse empowerment can help prevent nurse burnout and result in a higher quality of care. It is a plus if a facility is designated as a [Magnet hospital](#), industry recognition for facilities with the highest quality of nursing care and high rates of nurse satisfaction.

2. HOW HIGH IS PATIENT SATISFACTION?

Patient satisfaction can be an excellent measure of the quality of care patients receive. Individuals should ask if the hospital tracks patient satisfaction rates and if so, request to see the report. Potential patients should also review Hospital Consumer Assessment of

Healthcare Providers and Systems ([HCAPHS](#)) results. This national standardized survey tool measures adult inpatient perceptions of the quality of care at acute care hospitals.

3. HOW MANY NURSES ARE AVAILABLE?

Many states have implemented legislation or guidelines related to safer nurse staffing, such as overtime restrictions and mandated nurse to patient ratios. A lower patient-to-registered nurse (RN) ratio indicates that each nurse cares for fewer patients, and will have more time to give each patient individualized attention. Patients should also ask about overtime requirements, since nurses who work multiple hours of overtime are at greater risk for making mistakes.

4. WILL THE RIGHT NURSES BE CARING FOR ME?

Prospective patients should ask how the hospital creates its staffing plans. A strategic plan takes both nurses' skill sets and specific patient care needs into account, ensuring that the right nurse is scheduled with the right patient at the right time. It's called acuity-based staffing, and it means that patient-care needs drive nurse staffing.

5. IS THE HOSPITAL JOINT COMMISSION CERTIFIED?

The [Joint Commission](#) evaluates the quality and safety of care of healthcare providers and awards accreditation based on how well hospitals meet Joint Commission standards. Staffing effectiveness indicators are included in the required metrics, providing a measure of how well the hospital utilizes the workforce to provide safe, high-quality care to patients. There are also many well-respected organizations that review and rank hospitals on specific criteria, such as nurse satisfaction and patient outcomes. These lists can easily be found with an online search. Examples include: [Thompson Reuters Top 100 Hospitals](#), [U.S. News and World Report Best Hospitals](#), and [HealthGrades](#).

About API Healthcare

API Healthcare (www.apihealthcare.com) is the largest healthcare-specific provider of workforce management solutions for the healthcare industry. The company's staffing and scheduling, patient classification, human resources, recruiting, payroll, time and attendance, business analytics, and staffing agency solutions are used by more than 1,000 hospitals and staffing agencies. Founded in 1982, API Healthcare has been rated as the top time and attendance provider system for the last eight years (2002-2009) in the "Top 20 Best in KLAS Awards Report" (www.KLASresearch.com). More information can be found at www.apihealthcare.com.

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