

Conflicting reports on care at Barton Hospital

By Kathryn Reed

Mixed messages are being sent to Barton Health regarding its care for hospital patients.

“The Joint Commission is the major governing body for hospitals across the nation. They have invited us to share best practices on one of our safety measures because of our good work here,” Monica Sciuto, spokeswoman for Barton, told *Lake Tahoe News*. The invite came last week.

But it came on the heels of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services announcing Barton Memorial Hospital is one of 761 hospitals with a high rate of patient harm.

Analysts looked at rates of infections in patients with catheters in major veins and their bladders, blood clots, bedsores and accidental falls. A score of 1 to 10 was given; with the higher number meaning the hospital had a greater rate of patient harm. Barton scored a 10.

Barton has not been officially notified about the analysis and findings.

“Barton can challenge the findings if the data presented does not seem correct. If we are notified, we will have the opportunity to validate the data and look at every case to make sure it is correct,” Clint Purvance, Barton’s chief medical officer, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The goal of the feds is to quash the occurrences of people getting sicker or acquiring a new medical problem while hospitalized. Hospitals with a score of 7 or higher will receive fewer reimbursements from Medicare.

“It is our understanding that some adjustments in the measures may be made for smaller hospitals and for hospitals in rural areas because of the small patient population sizes and the large effect just a few events makes to their scores,” Purvance said.

He went on to say, “To give you a sense of scale, our daily hospital census averages 20-21 patients per day versus a larger, urban hospital who may have upward of 600 patients per day at their facility. As an example, when one patient suffered from a Foley catheter urinary tract infection, this gave us a 17 percent rate on the report. In larger hospitals, one event like this would be a small drop in the bucket.”

On the positive side, in October, Barton received the highest recognition in the American Hospital Association’s Partnership for Patient campaign. The South Lake Tahoe hospital was selected as a mentor hospital by the Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services.

This is the same group that six months later released the unflattering report.

Part of the problem is different data are used. The negative results come from infections during the 12-month period from July 2012 through June 2013. The California Hospital Association uses current data. Final data, used for the penalty phase, will include Jan. 1, 2012, to Dec. 31, 2013, according to Purvance.

Barton posts patient safety information online. Here are some examples:

- Catheter associated urinary tract infections in 2013 – zero
- Ventilator associated pneumonias since 2010 – zero
- Central line associated blood stream infections since

January 2012 – zero

- Falls with injuries since January 2012 – zero.

Barton admits in 2008 it was considered average for the number of “adverse events”. A commitment to patient safety and training employees led to a turnaround.

Today, Barton spends more than \$1 million a year on staffing for patient safety and quality initiatives including a quality management team, patient safety officer and chief medical officer. In 2008, that dollar amount was \$100,000.