

For Immediate Release

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“Alameda Model” Breakthrough Study Shows 80% Reduction in Delays for Psychiatric Care; Prevents ER Boarding of Psychiatric Patients

Analysis Builds Case for Enhanced Access, Fewer Hospitalizations and Lower Costs

SAN LEANDRO, CA (October 15, 2013) — John George Psychiatric Hospital (JGPH) announced the publication of a new study showing the use of regional psychiatric emergency services (PES) in appropriate health systems could significantly reduce health care costs while improving access and quality of care. In response to a nationwide dilemma where psychiatric patients often “board” without treatment in emergency rooms (ER) for long hours or even days, Scott Zeller, MD, Chief of Psychiatric Emergency Services for Alameda Health System (AHS) conducted the study entitled, [“Effects of a Dedicated Regional Psychiatric Emergency Service on Boarding of Psychiatric Patients in the Emergency Department.”](#)

The research report, published in the *Western Journal of Emergency Medicine*, demonstrates how the innovative “Alameda Model” of transferring patients from general hospital emergency departments to regional psychiatric emergency service reduces the length of boarding times for patients awaiting psychiatric care by over 80 percent, as compared to state emergency department averages. Analysis also found that psychiatric emergency services provide assessment and treatment that may stabilize over 75 percent of the crisis mental health population at this level of care, resulting in reduced demand for inpatient psychiatric beds.

“Patient boarding for long hours in emergency departments is a nationwide health care issue. Federal and state efforts to solve it have revolved around increasing numbers of inpatient psychiatric beds. The Alameda Model focuses on immediate treatment at the outpatient level of care, with a goal of avoiding hospitalization altogether. It bypasses medical emergency rooms completely in two-thirds of cases, further reducing issues of regional ER overcrowding. These are national health care reform goals,” Dr. Zeller, AHS Chief of Psychiatric Emergency Services said. “Our hope and recommendation is that state and federal officials work to implement the Alameda Model across the state, and help make California’s facility-based Medicaid billing code available in states throughout the country.”

The average amount of time for ER boarding of psychiatric patients in California is 10 hours. Using the Alameda Model, the time was reduced over 80 percent to 1 hour 48 minutes. The Alameda Model is currently possible in all California hospitals and health systems due to a facility-based billing code for “Crisis Stabilization” within Medi-Cal. The report recommends enacting a policy change to include the code in other state Medicaid programs and in Medicare.

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About John George Psychiatric Hospital (JGPH)

John George Psychiatric Hospital, located in San Leandro, California, is part of Alameda Health System (AHS), a major public health care provider recognized as a world-class patient and family centered system of care. The facility provides psychiatric emergency and acute care services to adults experiencing severe and disabling mental illnesses, and treats all who seek care regardless of their economic or social status.

The hospital provides care for nearly 100 percent of all acute psychiatric emergencies in Alameda County, and is a leader in the use of data analytics to formulate effective care decisions. Emphasis on best-practice behavioral techniques and data analytics has enabled John George to rise in the ranks of psychiatric hospitals and units nationwide.

A major economic force in Alameda County, AHS employs 3,200 people including over 500 physicians at seven facilities throughout the county. Besides John George, these include Highland Hospital, a major regional trauma center and teaching hospital, Fairmont Hospital, an acute rehabilitation and skilled nursing facility, and four ambulatory wellness centers at Eastmont, Highland, Newark and Hayward.