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PROVIDING HIGH-ACUITY ORTHOPEDIC AND SPINE CASES

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in pre- and postop care*

ASCA Ambulatory Surgery
Center Association



Participate in an Orthopedic Registry

Join the 'transparency revolution' **BY ROBERT KURTZ**

Health care consumers are at a disadvantage when it comes to researching their surgical options, says Thomas Wilson, chief executive officer of Monterey Peninsula Surgery Center in Monterey, California.

"When people are looking at buying a car, they are able to conduct an incredible amount of research," he says. "They look at *Consumer Reports* for information, research the manufacturer's actual cost and resale value, and learn how the vehicle responds in a crash, how it handles and so much more. This helps the buyer make an informed decision."

When it is time to research total hip replacement surgery, however, which can cost more than a car, none of the comparable information is available, he points out. "You cannot learn about the performance of the surgeon, infection rate or quality of the implant," he says. "We strongly believe that such information needs to be made public and think ASCs will outperform all

options when that information is made available to the consumer. We might call this the transparency revolution."

Wilson predicts that participation in an orthopedic registry will make this a reality sooner rather than later. Monterey Peninsula Surgery Center has participated in a registry for the past several years. They were the first ASC to join the California Joint Replacement Registry and now are members of the American Joint Replacement Registry (AJRR).

High Pointe Surgery Center in Lake Elmo, Minnesota, another AJRR participant, got involved with the registry in January 2016. "We are required to collect demographic information, CPT codes, surgical approach, type of procedure, start time and total time of procedure, surgeon information and implant information, including manufacturer, type of implant and corresponding identifying numbers," says Diane Lulic, RN, the ASC's director of regulatory affairs.

"This information is then uploaded to the registry on a quarterly basis."

Putting Data to Work

Submitting data is only part of the value of participating in a registry, says Wendy Marinkovich, managing director of designation management, national solutions, for Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) in Chicago, Illinois.

A registry provides actionable data that can identify a path for improving the quality of patient care, she says. "Registries provide a standardized definition for tracking outcomes and typically provide risk-adjusted results. This information can assist in tracking patient outcomes and reveal early trends that might indicate a quality issue. In today's health care landscape, there is a focus on improving quality and increasing patient safety. Benchmarking against other participating centers and surgeons in the registry helps a facility understand its performance in comparison to others."

Wilson views data from the registry as a resource that will help improve his ASC's ability to provide high-quality care. "We can set appropriate goals and benchmark them. If we learn of organizations outperforming us in an area such as infection or readmission rate, we will contact them and learn about the practices they are using that we should adopt. I would expect other organizations to approach us if our statistics are favorable. That is how we are all going to raise the bar."

Registry participation is an important part of a number of BCBSA's national designation programs, Marinkovich says. "With the use of standardized definitions and consistent methodology in measurement, benchmarking against others is possible. It provides a mechanism for accurate comparison data."

Participation delivers benefits beyond benchmarking, says Traci Albers, director of operations for Sur-

gical Management Professionals, an ASC and surgical hospital management and development company in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, that manages High Pointe Surgery Center.

“As more ASCs are performing joint replacements, we believe it is important to submit this data not only for our purposes of benchmarking and patient care improvement but also to support the physician practice’s efforts,” she says. “Our orthopedic partners use this data. It offers them the ability to review all of their joint replacements across all of their surgical settings. If we did not participate, they would only have data from some of their settings; thus, it would not be a comprehensive picture of their joint replacement practice.”

The most important beneficiaries of registry participation are patients, says Monica Aarthun, RN, High Pointe Surgery Center’s executive director. “Our overall goal is to continually improve the patient experience. By partnering with the orthopedic physicians utilizing our facility and using the AJRR, we have useful data to assist us in improving this patient experience.”

Raising the ASC Profile

Besides improving quality of care, belonging to a registry can bring positive attention to an ASC, Marinkovich says, “It can often be interpreted as the facility caring about the safety of their patients and quality of care they provide. It also indicates that a facility is willing to put resources into ensuring quality.”

Wilson views registry participation as an opportunity to get on the radar of self-insured groups. “We believe they are looking for ‘centers of value.’ We define centers of value as the optimum combination of quality, as measured by outcomes; service, as measured by patient satisfaction; and price. We expect these groups to steer their cases to centers of value; for total joints, that will be an ASC. Of course, we hope our ASC is one of them.

“If we are ever going to control health care costs in this country, we really need to direct care to the most efficient setting. A strong case can be made that ASCs match this description.”

—Thomas Wilson, Monterey Peninsula Surgery Center

Albers says ASCs need data to help support the claim that surgery centers should be the preferred setting for ambulatory surgery and affect change in that regard. “We believe outpatient joint replacements offer patients a choice where they can receive their care, and we are providing this care in a high-quality, cost-effective manner. These AJRR results support our position from a quality standpoint and are necessary to provide transparency and demonstrate our commitment to that quality.”

The sooner data captured in the registry is shared with the public, the better, Wilson says. “We are strong believers in transparency. The

ASC industry has a much lower rate of complications, infection, emergency room visits and readmissions. We want consumers to have as much information as possible so they can make an informed decision about their health care choices.

“We are confident that when this data is released, it will show that we have superior quality and higher patient satisfaction along with lower costs,” he continues. “If we are ever going to control health care costs in this country, we really need to direct care to the most efficient setting. A strong case can be made that ASCs match this description.” ◀

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