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**Press Ganey Releases Innovative Report to Assess
Culture of Safety in U.S. Hospitals**

Report Coincides With Patient Safety Awareness Week

March 10, 2009 (South Bend, Ind.) – In conjunction with Patient Safety Awareness Week, Press Ganey Associates, Inc. today released a first-of-its-kind *Safety Culture Pulse Report* to assess the correlation between medical errors and the cultural impacts within the health care provider workplace. The report establishes a baseline for future efforts in safety improvement and is timely because, despite the many advances toward prevention, medical errors remain a significant problem in today's health care system.

“At Press Ganey we work with more than 40 percent of the nation's hospitals and have a unique vantage point on the health of the U.S. health care provider system. As a result, we recognized a large unmet need in addressing the substantial problems of preventing medical errors,” said Chris Hickey, vice president of Safety Culture at Press Ganey. “We have the data through which we can assess what cultural aspects impact error prevention and, with our guidance, many of our hospital clients have benefited by focusing on a low-tech solution— changing the hospital culture and atmosphere to focus on safety.”

The *Safety Culture Pulse Report* analyzes data collected from 42,378 health care employees who were given the opportunity to report on their perceptions of their facilities' practices that affect safety culture. The report assessed 13 dimensions of patient safety culture and found several notable points:

- Among 21 work areas, hospice and outpatient area staff reported the highest perception of safety, while emergency department and anesthesiology staff report the lowest perception.
- Health care providers employed by government-run hospitals report a focus on safety prevention that is considerably lower than tax-exempt hospitals, especially faith-based facilities.

- Health care providers' perception of safety in their hospital steadily decreases as the size of the facility increases.
- Staff members who work less than 20 hours a week report the highest level of focus on safety, while those who work 60 or more hours each week report increasingly lower perceptions of the safety of their hospital.
- Interestingly, employees who have worked in health care for 6 to 10 years report the lowest sense of safety in their workplace. Employees who have worked for less than a year report the highest level of safety focus.

The study found that “assessing blame for errors rather than addressing system failures as the root cause of errors” is the primary impediment to improving error prevention and creating a culture focused on safety, according to employees. The staff responses also identified “mistakes that occur during patient handoffs and transitions, including staff shift changes” as the second greatest threat to improved patient safety.

“Preventable medical errors remain one of the biggest challenges for health care providers and increased federal scrutiny has compounded the issue. New technology cannot completely correct the issue and hospitals simply cannot ignore the cultural issues that impact safety at its very core,” said Hickey.

Press Ganey found that the greatest opportunity to improve the culture and perception of safety in a hospital is an adjustment in the hospitals administrators' involvement in the issue. Many employees believe that “hospital management seems interested in patient safety only after an adverse event happens,” and yet this is the most easily addressed factor. Administrators must take an active role in the patient safety process, even if they do not directly treat a patient.

The full *Safety Culture Pulse Report* offers complete data sets, as well as hospital case studies and suggested solutions to improve the culture of safety amongst our nations' health care providers.

The 2009 Safety Culture Pulse Report is available at

http://www.pressganey.com/galleries/default-file/Safety_Culture_Pulse_Report_2009.pdf.

Commentary from Chris Hickey is available upon request.

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Press Ganey Associates, Inc.

For more than 20 years, Press Ganey has been committed to providing insight that allows health care organizations to improve the quality of care they provide while improving their bottom-line results. The company offers the largest comparative customer feedback databases, actionable data, solution resources, and unparalleled consulting and customer service. Press Ganey currently partners with more than 7,000 health care facilities—including over 40% of U.S. hospitals—to measure and improve the quality of their care.

About Patient Safety Awareness Week

Held annually, Patient Safety Awareness Week is designed to engage staff, patients, and community by emphasizing the critical need for partnership and participation in the drive for a safer health care system. Programs highlighting new methods for improving the information exchange that occurs during patient-provider encounters will be launched and promoted during the course of the week.

About the National Patient Safety Foundation

The National Patient Safety Foundation is an independent not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization that has been diligently pursuing one mission since its founding in 1997 – to improve the safety of patients. NPSF also occupies a unique position by virtue of its inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach, which fosters collaboration on the issue of patient safety.

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