FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 8, 2012

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SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN HOSPITALS IMPROVE CARE FOR PATIENTS
AS PART OF NATIONAL PROGRAM ON QUALITY AND SAFETY OF
CARE IN HOSPITALS

The Greater Detroit Area Health Council announces findings from local hospitals’
participation in Aligning Forces for Quality

Detroit, MI – Staff from local hospitals are being lauded by the Greater Detroit Area Health Council (GDAHC) for their part in a prestigious national program to improve the quality and safety of patient care. The effort is part of Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q), a national program to significantly improve health care in targeted communities. GDAHC is one of just 16 communities selected by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to participate in AF4Q.

Sinai-Grace Hospital, St. Joseph Mercy Oakland, and McLaren Macomb took part in the AF4Q Hospital Quality Network (HQN).

More than 100 hospitals nationwide worked together for 18 months through AF4Q to improve the quality and safety of patient care. During this time, 90 percent of the participating hospital teams improved the quality of care for their patients in measurable ways, resulting in hundreds of avoided hospital readmissions; improved patient safety; standardized collection of information on patients’ race, ethnicity and language preference (REAL), which helps ensure that care is equal for all patients; and reduced wait times in hospital emergency departments (EDs).

Funded by RWJF and staffed by experts at The George Washington University, AF4Q is an unprecedented effort to improve quality of care in communities nationwide and reduce racial and ethnic disparities in health care. Hospitals participating in the effort were part of a virtual network where they developed, shared, and implemented quality improvement tools, strategies, and lessons learned.

“Southeast Michigan is in the forefront of improving health care nationwide, and we are delighted to have these three hospitals join us for this successful Aligning Forces for Quality initiative,” said Lisa Mason, Vice President of Cost Quality at GDAHC. “These hospitals have shown that real progress can be made in our community when you combine a culture of change with teamwork and a willingness to share.”
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On July 19th, GDAHC held a “Hospital Quality Network Summit: Increasing ED Throughput” event, which focused on the three participating Southeast Michigan hospitals’ ED improvements during the initiative. Crowding and poor patient flow impact quality and safety and can cause patients to remain in the ED longer than necessary. Delays in care also cause some patients to leave the ED before being seen by a provider. Sinai-Grace, St. Joseph Mercy Oakland, and McLaren Macomb participated in the ED throughput track of HQN. These hospitals shared experiences from their participation in HQN with teams from nine other hospitals in southeast Michigan at the Summit.

The results include:

- Sinai-Grace Hospital decreased their average length of stay in the ED by almost 1 hour over a six-month period.
- Over four months, St. Joseph Mercy Oakland was able to decrease their diversion hours, or the time the ED was closed due to overcapacity, from 41 to 0 hours a month and decrease the percent of patients who left without being seen in the ED from 4 percent to 1 percent.
- McLaren Macomb reduced the average time between patients’ arrival at the ED to their admission to the hospital by 19 minutes over the course of the initiative.

Other measurable improvements in HQN were the reduction of hospital readmissions and an increase in adherence to care standards. National data show about one in four Medicare patients admitted to the hospital for chronic diseases return to the hospital within 30 days of being discharged. Hospitals participating in AF4Q worked to ensure that processes were followed and patients had all the information they needed to safely transition from the hospital setting. McLaren Macomb participated in the reducing readmission track of the HQN. As part of this effort, the hospital put in place a process for health unit clerks to print a daily list to ensure that all heart failure patients are weighed and developed a teaching booklet on heart failure. In addition to other improvements, these initiatives increased patient education, helped identify those patients at risk and in the long run will hopefully decrease heart failure readmissions.

“We know that even though many hospitals consistently deliver good care, there’s always room for improvement,” said Susan Mende, BSN, MPH, senior program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “Aligning Forces for Quality has shown that hospitals in Southeast Michigan and around the country want to do better and are willing to take steps needed to deliver the best care possible to their patients.”

In each AF4Q region, a range of efforts to help doctors, nurses and hospitals improve quality – as well as engage consumers to be better patients – is being tested. For more information, visit www.forces4quality.org.

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About the Greater Detroit Area Health Council
The Greater Detroit Area Health Council (GDAHC) is a multi-stakeholder regional coalition. The organization brings together stakeholders in our community, at a single table, to address health care quality, access and cost in southeastern Michigan. As a health care leader that is recognized regionally and nationally, GDAHC works with everyone who gets care, gives care and pays for care to lift the quality of overall care in the community producing healthy people and a healthy economy. www.gdahc.org

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation’s largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive,
measurable, and timely change. For 40 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

About Aligning Forces for Quality
Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q) is the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s signature effort to lift the overall quality of health care in targeted communities, as well as reduce racial and ethnic disparities and provide real models for national reform. The Foundation’s commitment to improve health care in 16 AF4Q communities is the largest effort of its kind ever undertaken by a U.S. philanthropy. AF4Q asks the people who get care, give care and pay for care to work together to improve the quality and value of care delivered locally. The Center for Health Care Quality in the Department of Health Policy at George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services serves as the national program office. Learn more about AF4Q at www.forces4quality.org. Learn more about RWJF’s efforts to improve quality and equality of care at www.rwjf.org/qualityequality/af4q/.