

Press Release
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Hospice Compassus Launches Keeping the Promise 2012: A National Quality Initiative for U.S. Hospice Care

National Hospice Provider Intends to Set and Pursue Higher Standards for Entire Industry

NASHVILLE, Tenn., Sept. 25, 2011 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ -- While many U.S. healthcare providers try to keep up with changing regulations designed to improve quality care and patient outcomes, one of the nation's leading hospice providers is taking a voluntary, proactive lead in setting new quality standards for the hospice industry. Hospice Compassus, a Nashville, Tenn.- based company that operates a nationwide network of community-based hospice programs, officially launched its National Quality Care Initiative on Sept. 25 in Scottsdale, Ariz. during a meeting of more than 200 of its top employees and medical advisors.

"Keeping the Promise 2012" is a national effort to achieve delivery of the highest possible quality care to hospice patients.

Former Sen. William "Bill" Frist, MD delivered the keynote address at the event and joined some of the nation's most recognized and influential hospice and palliative care physicians in supporting the Initiative.

"Because of my personal experience in public service and in healthcare, I have a unique perspective on how policy shapes our healthcare system. There is a lot of focus at the federal level and within the medical community on improving quality outcomes for patients," said Frist. "I think real change and progress occurs, however, not when businesses are forced to comply with mandates, but when professionals who work every day in a given field recognize a need, develop an innovative solution, and then act on it. I applaud Hospice Compassus for their vision and fully support their effort to improve their own performance and challenge the rest of the hospice industry to meet the highest standards." The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services is scheduled to release a set of hospice quality measures in 2012, and hospice programs will be required to publicly report on the measures in 2014. Hospice Compassus has voluntarily tracked its own quality data since January 2011, meaning the company will be able to report on a full three years of meaningful quality data by the time other hospice programs are required to report by CMS.

The primary quality indicators in Keeping the Promise 2012 are patients' pain levels and the education they receive regarding medication, treatment and symptoms. Hospice Compassus is tracking these and other indicators to measure its performance against self-imposed quality standards.

"Hospice providers serve in a clinical and compassionate role that is very important yet drastically underutilized in the continuum of care. All healthcare is about helping those in need, and hospice and palliative care alleviates suffering and improves the quality of life," said Sean Morrison, MD, Hermann

Merkin Professor of Palliative Care at the Mount Sinai, School of Medicine, Director of the National Palliative Care Research Center and immediate past president of American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine.

More than 1 million people in the U.S. receive hospice care each year, although as many as 50 percent of those who have the option of hospice care never access the benefits. A study of the non-hospice end-of-life experiences reported that 40 percent of patients were in severe pain prior to their death, and 25 percent experienced moderate to great anxiety or depression before they died.

"We intend to set a new standard of quality that is both remarkable to patients and their families, and attainable for providers who embrace the spirit and promise of compassionate care. That is what Keeping the Promise 2012 is about. That is what we are going to achieve," said Corina Tracy, Senior Vice President of Clinical Services for Hospice Compassus.

Hospice Compassus will carry out its National Quality Care Initiative with continuous action in more than 50 community-based hospice programs across the U.S., and through support and reinforcement from company management.

About Hospice Compassus

Hospice Compassus is a nationwide network of community-based hospice programs. Based in Nashville, Tenn., the company opened its first hospice in 1979 and today operates in more than 30 markets across the U.S. The mission of Hospice Compassus and its affiliates is to honor life and offer hope to individuals facing terminal illness by supporting them with a common culture focused on three core values: Compassion, integrity and excellence. Hospice Compassus employs more than 1,200 colleagues who provide a range of hospice services and other resources to benefit patients and families. Our primary goals are to provide the highest quality hospice care and service in every community in which we operate and to be the hospice employer of choice. For more information please visit www.hospicecompassus.com follow the company on Facebook or call (877) 377-1607.

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