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The Leapfrog Group welcomes New Study

- (WASHINGTON, D.C.)—The Leapfrog Group welcomed a new study published this week by the *Center for Studying Health System Change*. Says Claire Turner, communications director of The Leapfrog Group “It is always useful to have feedback on the impact that your organization is having. We are delighted that The Leapfrog Group has succeeded in raising the issue of patient safety up the health care agenda in the short time we have been in existence.”

“Leapfrog has always been clear that our safety standards are set high, they are ‘big leaps’ in patient safety and therefore not easily attainable. We did not expect hospitals to be able to implement them overnight. However, since Leapfrog began surveying hospitals in 2001, implementation and participation rates have risen. In our third yearly survey which ends in March 2004 1,136 hospitals have reported so far.

“Leapfrog’s hospital survey shows that, in fact, implementation levels in seven out of eight Leapfrog measures is higher in hospitals reporting from our regional roll out areas than hospitals who report that are outside those areas. For example 24% of hospitals in our regional roll outs fully meet the Leapfrog standard for intensivist physician staffing compared to 11% of hospitals outside the roll outs.

“Public reporting is just one lever that The Leapfrog Group has been working to bring about change in hospital safety and quality. We have always acknowledged that large scale change in health care quality will only be achieved by introducing incentives into the market. Now that our survey and the idea of publicly reporting quality information is better established, Leapfrog is concentrating its efforts in this area. As well as working with our employer members we are also working with health plans to be better able to reward quality.

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“It is important to note that incentives for health care quality do already exist. Leapfrog has recently compiled a compendium of incentive and reward schemes across the country, and found over 78 already in place, a number of them using Leapfrog standards.

”Another tactic Leapfrog has employed is to raise awareness of patient safety and quality amongst all our stakeholders including hospitals, employers and their enrollees. We will be working this year to raise awareness amongst clinicians of the importance and relevance of our safety and quality standards as we recognize that their involvement is crucial to our success.”

About The Leapfrog Group

The Leapfrog Group was founded in November 2000 by the Business Roundtable and has support from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Leapfrog was created to help save lives, reduce preventable medical mistakes and improve the quality of health care by giving consumers the information they need to make more informed health care choices. More than 150 Fortune 500 corporations and other large private and public sector health benefits purchasers have joined The Leapfrog Group, representing more than 34 million enrollees. The Leapfrog Group began surveying hospitals in 2001. Hospital patient safety data can be found at www.leapfroggroup.org

The Leapfrog Group’s effort was launched the same year an Institute of Medicine report revealed that tens of thousands of Americans die each year from preventable medical mistakes made in hospitals. In addition, nearly one million medication errors occur in hospitals each year. Research conducted by John D. Birkmeyer, M.D., Dartmouth Medical School, indicates that the three Leapfrog improvements could save nearly 60,000 lives per year, and prevent more than half a million serious medication errors if all non-rural hospitals in the United States implemented them. In addition, the U.S. health care system could save approximately \$9.7 billion annually.

Under evidence-based hospital referral, there are seven high-risk procedures and conditions that Leapfrog measures on volume, process and outcomes. Coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery, Percutaneous Coronary Interventions, Abdominal aortic aneurysm repair, Pancreatic cancer resection, Esophageal surgery and two high-risk neonatal conditions.

In addition to The Leapfrog Group’s Web site, Leapfrog member corporations and organizations make survey information available to employees through corporate Web sites and employee health care benefits materials. In addition, many health plans and the following Web-based vendors also disseminate the data: DoctorQuality, Inc.; Subimo; Select Quality Care; and Health Grades, Inc.

Partnering in this effort are The MEDSTAT Group and HealthGrades. The MEDSTAT Group (www.medstat.com) is providing data collection, analysis and support services for this effort. This includes designing and developing the online hospital survey, fielding the survey via the Web and reporting the results to The Leapfrog Group. HealthGrades is Leapfrog’s technology partner, providing data analysis and a consumer ratings system of the results. HealthGrades also will display the data on its own Web site (www.healthgrades.com).

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