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Statewide Health Care Coalition: Reduction of Pressure Ulcers Seen as Essential to Improving Long-term Care Quality in Virginia

Richmond, VA January 10, 2008 - A statewide healthcare coalition has issued a Call to Action to improve quality of care within the long-term care system by reducing the now high incidence of pressure ulcers (bed sores). This Call to Action is a culmination of a statewide summit which was sponsored recently by AARP Virginia and Virginia Pressure Ulcer Resource Team (VPURT).

“Virginia has one of the highest rates of pressure ulcers in the country and it is essential to have a focused, united and consistent effort from the entire healthcare community to attack this chronic problem that adversely affects quality throughout our long-term care system, “emphasized Kenneth Olshansky, M.D., a member of the Virginia Pressure Ulcer Resource Team (VPURT) in issuing the Coalition’s Call to Action and asking the State Department of Health to lead the effort.

VPURT members include doctors, nurses, administrators and representatives of state agencies, professional, consumer organizations and providers (hospitals and long-term care facilities) of health care services.

In addition to VPURT efforts, pressure ulcers have been recognized as a problem in the Report of the Governor’s Health Reform Commission Report - ...”measures aimed to reduce the occurrence of pressure ulcers among nursing home residents would help target one area in need of improvement within the Commonwealth.”

VPURT has identified critical components for pressure ulcer prevention including: quality enhancement; regulatory effectiveness, resource revitalization and workforce first.

Indeed, pressure ulcers are a considerable problem. It is estimated as many as 23.9% of all long term-care residents may develop pressure ulcers. Approximately 70 percent of all pressure ulcers occur in individuals over the age of 70.

“We must act now; this problem is only going to become an even greater challenge with the coming growth in older Virginians. By 2020, there will be nearly 1.5 million Virginians 65 years of age and older,” Olshansky noted.

“Evidence clearly indicates that most pressure ulcers are preventable and effective prevention efforts require two major steps: first, identifying patients at risk and implementing strategies for such patients,” VPURT’s member concluded.

In issuing VPURT’s Call to Action, the Summit’s attendees developed the following priorities for pressure ulcer prevention –

- Make pressure ulcer prevention a key outcome parameter for Pay for Performance
- Increase staffing levels to meet the critical needs of the residents for prevention of pressure ulcers
- Increase the pay of the direct care staff in nursing facilities
- Increase the accountability of every health care professional in pressure ulcer prevention
- Make pressure ulcers a reportable event
- Develop and implement a Uniform Patient Transfer Form
- Create an independent Center for Pressure Ulcer Prevention Education
- Redirect unused DMAS \$10/day bed supplement to pressure ulcer prevention in high-risk patients
- Revise COPN for nursing facility beds to emphasize quality

This summit report was officially presented by representatives of AARP Virginia and VPURT to Gail Jaspen, Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources in Virginia State Government on January 3, 2008.