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August 9, 2011

Donald M. Berwick, M.D., M.P.P.  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
Hubert H. Humphrey Building  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 445-G  
Washington, DC 20201

***RE: Proposed Decision Memo for Screening for Depression in Adults (CAG-00425N)***

Dear Dr. Berwick:

On behalf of our more than 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our nearly 42,000 individual members, the American Hospital Association (AHA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) proposed decision memorandum for depression screening in adults.

**We fully support CMS's proposal to add alcohol screening and behavioral counseling, and screening for depression to the package of preventive services offered to Medicare beneficiaries.** Prevention of illness or disability only occurs when beneficiaries receive an accurate diagnosis, effective treatment and appropriate follow-up. Evidence supports improved health outcomes for beneficiaries when they receive screening and behavioral counseling to reduce alcohol misuse. We also agree that screening for depression in adults is reasonable and necessary for the prevention or early detection of illness or disability, and is appropriate for individuals entitled to benefits under Part A or enrolled under Part B. In addition, we believe that the primary care setting is an appropriate venue through which these services should be delivered.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Joanna Hiatt Kim, senior associate director for policy, at (202) 626-2340 or [jkim@aha.org](mailto:jkim@aha.org).

Sincerely,

/s/

Rick Pollack  
Executive Vice President

