

Wednesday, November 20, 2013

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICES SURROUNDING NEWBORN SCREENING

AT A GLANCE

Background:

Beginning this past weekend, a series of news articles on delays in screening newborns for treatable diseases at hospitals across the country was published in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. The series illustrates the difficulties created by delays, and how prompt screening can save lives and prevent disabilities. Shortly after birth and before they are discharged, newborns are tested for genetic disorders via a simple blood test. These samples are sent to state-run or state-contracted labs for screening. The rules for expediting the tests and delivering the results to health care professionals vary from state to state. The news series includes a link to [a map](#) outlining the state-by-state screening programs. When available, hospital-specific information is listed. You can read the national story [here](#).

Our Take:

This series is a good reminder for hospitals and health systems to thoroughly examine their practices and ensure that they are meeting their state's standards. There are several steps in the newborn screening process: obtaining the samples, sending them to the lab, and receiving the results in a timely manner. Each of these steps represents a potential point at which a delay can occur. Because of the importance of this issue, **the AHA encourages all hospitals to examine their policies on newborn screening and communication with their state labs.**

What You Can Do:

- ✓ Share this advisory with your key clinical staff, laboratory leadership, quality professionals and public relations teams.
- ✓ [Check the map](#) to see whether your facility is included in the *Sentinel's* analysis.
- ✓ Review your organization's procedures to ensure prompt delivery of the blood samples to your state lab. Make sure you are meeting your state's standards.
- ✓ Be prepared to talk to obstetricians, pediatricians and expectant parents in your community about the steps you are taking to ensure prompt testing.

Next Steps:

The AHA and its Section for Maternal and Child Health will host an AHA members-only conference call on Dec. 12 at 2 p.m. ET to address this issue. The call features case examples of hospital best practices. AHA members can register online by [clicking here](#). Dial-in information and call materials will be emailed to you prior to the call.

Further Questions:

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