



**American Hospital
Association**

Contact: Marie Watteau, (202) 626-2351
Carly Moore, (202) 638-5487

NEWS RELEASE

NEW REPORT: RISING SEVERITY OF ILLNESS AMONG MEDICARE PATIENTS TREATED IN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

WASHINGTON (May 2, 2013) – Sicker, more complex Medicare patients are driving up the intensity of emergency department (ED) care, [a new report](#) released today by the American Hospital Association (AHA) found. Recent data indicate that the number of ED services provided to Medicare beneficiaries is growing and that patients’ needs are shifting toward services that demand the use of more resources.

“The reality is that seniors who come to the hospital ED are sicker and have more chronic illnesses,” said AHA President and CEO Rich Umbdenstock. “Hospitals are striving to meet their communities’ needs, which means caring for patients who need more – and more intensive services – than ever before.”

Policymakers have noted an upward shift in the intensity of care provided to Medicare beneficiaries in hospital emergency departments and have raised concerns that the trend is leading to higher spending. Between 2006 and 2010, the severity of illness of beneficiaries receiving services in the emergency department increased, as did the rate of use.

The report, based on an analysis of Medicare claims data conducted by The Moran Company, outlines a number of factors that are contributing to this trend:

- Medicare beneficiaries receiving emergency department care are sicker than they used to be when they arrive
- The rate of use of emergency department services by Medicare beneficiaries is rising
- Patient care is shifting from the inpatient hospital to the ED
- Use of the emergency department by dual-eligible patients (those who qualify for both Medicaid and Medicare) is rising
- Emergency departments are serving more Medicare patients with behavioral health diagnoses

The report is available at www.aha.org.

About the AHA

The AHA is a not-for-profit association of health care provider organizations and individuals that are committed to the health improvement of their communities. The AHA is the national advocate for its members, which includes more than 5,000 hospitals, health care systems, networks, other providers of care and 42,000 individual members. Founded in 1898, the AHA provides education for health care leaders and is a source of information on health care issues and trends. For more information, visit the AHA Web site at www.aha.org.

###