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WITH THE LAUNCH OF THE CONVERSATION PROJECT, IHI COMMITS TO HELPING HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS DEVELOP SYSTEMS TO HONOR PATIENTS' END-OF-LIFE WISHES**Pioneering Health Care Organizations Join with IHI to Design How to Be “Conversation Ready”**

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., (August 20, 2012)—The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) announced a new initiative today to better prepare health care delivery systems to receive and respect patients' wishes about end-of-life care. The initiative is a critical companion to The Conversation Project, which launched nationwide last week.

Too many Americans spend the last days of their lives in a way they would never choose. Silence on end-of-life preferences is a contributing factor. For example, in a survey conducted by the California Health Foundation, 60 percent of people in that state said that making sure their family is not burdened by tough end-of-life decisions is “extremely important.” Yet, more than half of those surveyed had not communicated their wishes to anyone.

Enter The Conversation Project, co-founded by Pulitzer Prize-winner Ellen Goodman, and developed in collaboration with IHI. Building on the experiences and best work of other notable initiatives and organizations, The Conversation Project is a public campaign with a simple and transformative goal: *to have every person's end-of-life wishes expressed and respected.*

As people express their wishes, it's critical that health care systems have the people and processes to hear and respect what's being said. IHI calls this being “conversation ready” and will now work closely with up to 10 pioneer sponsor organizations as well as prominent end-of-life experts to package proven methods and programs with new tools and strategies to achieve this goal. At the very basic level, many health care organizations have nothing in place to prompt discussions with patients and families about health care directives or end-of-life wishes, or to record, access, and follow the instructions. Pioneer sponsors have committed to be “conversation ready” within one year by developing and piloting processes to create these systems within health care and, in some instances, to break the silence between patient and provider. Pioneer sponsors will help create a roadmap for other interested organizations.

“Like many important issues in health care targeted for improvement,” says Maureen Bisognano, IHI's President and CEO, “end-of-life care has often suffered from good intentions without enough good systems in place to change behaviors, attitudes, and practices. When families and loved ones have discussed their wishes and preferences ahead of time, they can engage with the medical community differently; doctors and nurses, in turn, have the opportunity to act in a supportive fashion, using their clinical knowledge to help patients experience a ‘good death,’ as opposed to a ‘hard death’ that so many people fear and have witnessed. IHI is proud to be working with The Conversation Project and the pioneering organizations that have joined us to achieve this cultural change.”

“Anyone who has lost a loved one knows how hard it is to make end-of-life decisions when their wishes are unknown. Having these conversations is one of the most important gifts family members can give one another. We at Mercy Health are proud to partner with IHI in this important work that will help the people for whom we care be well during all the seasons of their lives,” said Margaret Namie, Divisional Vice President of Quality for Mercy Health.

In addition to Mercy Health, four organizations have joined the IHI initiative so far, including North Shore-LIJ Health System, Contra Costa Regional Medical Center, UPMC, and Qulturum in the County Council of Jönköping, Sweden. More participants will be announced as the program develops.

About The Conversation Project:

The Conversation Project, co-founded by Pulitzer Prize-winner Ellen Goodman, is a public engagement campaign with a goal that is both simple and transformative: to have every person’s end-of-life wishes expressed and respected. Too many people die in a manner they would not choose, so The Conversation Project offers people the tools, guidance, and resources they need to begin talking with their loved ones, around the kitchen table, about their wishes and preferences. Have you had the conversation? Learn more at: www.theconversationproject.org.

About IHI:

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (www.IHI.org) is an independent not-for-profit organization that works with health care providers and leaders throughout the world to achieve safe and effective health care. IHI focuses on motivating and building the will for change, identifying and testing new models of care in partnership with both patients and health care professionals, and ensuring the broadest possible adoption of best practices and effective innovations. Based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, IHI mobilizes teams, organizations, and increasingly nations, through its staff of more than 100 people and partnerships with hundreds of faculty around the world.

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