



DRAFT – 2/24/03 – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

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**WAITING WEEKS OR MONTHS FOR A DOCTOR’S APPOINTMENT
IS NOT NECESSARY**

**New Management Innovations, Requiring No Additional Resources,
Have Been Developed To Make Waiting For Doctors Obsolete**

Boston, MA – February 25, 2003 – In an article to be published tomorrow in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, two renowned authorities on health care improvement describe the management techniques that have been developed to make waiting weeks or months for a doctor’s appointment unnecessary. The authors – Mark Murray, MD, MPA, and Donald M. Berwick, MD, MPP – explain the techniques, which were initially developed by Dr. Murray and have been carried forward in multiple settings by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, a not-for-profit organization that Dr. Berwick leads. The techniques do not require any additional staffing. Instead they focus on more efficiently balancing the supply of health care providers and the demand of patients.

“We have become so accustomed to waiting for doctors, both to get an appointment and to see the doctor once you get to his or her office, that we assume it’s unavoidable,” said Dr. Murray. “We even assume that waiting is a sign of a successful practice, when the truth is it is usually the result of unplanned, irrational scheduling and resource allocation.”

“Eliminating waits takes hard work, determination and a new way of thinking about the doctor-patient relationship,” said Dr. Berwick, President and CEO of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, “but proven management techniques now exist which make it possible. The inefficiency of many medical practices is hurting healthcare, because it causes delays in addressing medical needs and frequently results in the patient seeing someone other than his or her primary care provider. It is time to change that, and we now know how.”

The article describes the problem of delays in health care access, the management models traditionally used, and the new approach, which is built around the concept of “Do Today’s Work Today.” The result is a proven approach that leads to less stressed staff, more satisfied patients, and levels of timeliness and clinical continuity that had not been thought possible.

A companion article – co-authored by Mark Murray, MD, Thomas Bodenheimer, MD, Diane Rittenhouse, MD, and Kevin Grumbach, MD – presents case studies of successful efforts to implement the new approach at the following health care providers:

- Bellevue Hospital, New York, New York
- Centra, a part of Central Dupage Health System, Winfield, Illinois
- South Central Foundation, Anchorage, Alaska
- Highland Family Practice, Lebanon, VA

It also includes lessons learned from these and other efforts to implement the approach.

For further information or copies of the articles, please contact Danielle Rhoades at 212-576-2700 or danielle@goodmanmedia.com.

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (www.ihl.org) is a not-for-profit organization leading the improvement of health care throughout the world. Founded in 1991 and based in Boston, MA, IHI is a catalyst for change, cultivating innovative concepts for improving patient care and implementing programs for putting those ideas into action. Thousands of health care providers, including many of the finest hospitals in the world, participate in IHI's groundbreaking work.

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