

TO MEDIA

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INDEPENDENCE HEALTH SYSTEM RECOGNIZED FOR QUALITY AND SAFETY BY LEADING GASTROINTESTINAL MEDICAL SOCIETY

GREENSBURG, PA, June 22, 2023 ... Independence Health System and endoscopy services systemwide have received national commendation by the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE), a leading gastrointestinal medical society.

Newly recognized with a three-year commendation are the Independence Health System endoscopy units at Frick, Latrobe and Westmoreland Hospitals, Laurel Surgical Center and Norwin Surgery Center, all in Westmoreland County. They join the Surgery Center at Benbrook in Butler, which previously earned this distinction. The ASGE program is dedicated to promoting quality in endoscopy in the settings where it is practiced in the United States.

“We are honored to be recognized by ASGE for our efforts to enhance quality and safety in our endoscopy units in Westmoreland County,” said Independence Health System gastroenterologist Rupam Sharan, MD about this new recognition for his GI team. “Through ongoing education and continued compliance with program requirements, we demonstrate our dedication to the delivery of comprehensive high-

quality patient care which starts with the office team providing patients prompt access for evaluation. The physicians carry it forward by following and reporting ASGE's national metrics for appropriate endoscopies."

Annually, more than 25,000 endoscopies are performed across Independence Health System.

These Independence Health System sites are among more than 600 endoscopy units nationwide to be granted the recognition since 2009. The ASGE Endoscopy Unit Recognition Program honors endoscopy units that have demonstrated a commitment to patient safety and quality in endoscopy as evidenced by meeting the program's rigorous criteria, which includes following the ASGE guidelines on privileging, quality assurance, endoscope reprocessing, staff competency, as well as infection control guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We are proud to acknowledge these endoscopy units through our Endoscopy Unit Recognition Program for their commitment to promoting the highest standards of quality and safety," said Joe Elmunzer, MD, chair, ASGE Quality Assurance in Endoscopy Committee. "By ensuring infection control principles are adhered to, continually assessing the competency of staff, and monitoring patient satisfaction, ASGE honoree units contribute to the public's confidence in endoscopy, a life-saving technology."

Endoscopy is performed using the most current technology to diagnose and treat diseases of the gastrointestinal tract. Using flexible, thin tubes called endoscopes, clinicians are able to access the digestive tract without incisions. Endoscopes are designed with high-intensity lighting and fitted with precision devices that allow viewing and treatment of the gastrointestinal system. At Independence Health System, endoscopy of the upper GI tract helps to diagnose and treat acid reflux and other esophageal disorders such as swallowing difficulties, ulcers and hiatal hernias.

An endoscopy of the lower GI tract is more commonly referred to as a colonoscopy and used to look for bowel abnormalities and provide treatment for abdominal pain, change in bowel character, inflammatory bowel disease, diverticulitis, colorectal polyps and hemorrhoids. Independence Health System gastroenterologists also perform ERCP's which are complex endoscopic procedures using catheters,

guidewires, balloons, baskets and stents to treat a variety of disorders involving the liver, gallbladder and pancreas. These disorders include gallstone disease, infections involving the liver and gallbladder along with cancers of the bile ducts, gallbladder and pancreas.

To be recognized by ASGE, a unit, through a peer-reviewed application process, must attest to the continued competence of all staff relative to their roles, demonstrate the adoption of unit policies specific to ongoing assessment of performance relative to key quality indicators, and attest that the unit has an established infrastructure and personnel dedicated to infection control and prevention. The program is applicable to all settings where endoscopy is practiced, including office-based endoscopy units, hospital-based endoscopy units, and stand-alone ambulatory surgery centers.

An important component of the program is the educational course, "Improving Quality and Safety in Your Endoscopy Unit," that thoroughly reviews related guidelines. Upon completion of the program, successful applicants are awarded honoree status in the ASGE Endoscopy Unit Recognition Program and receive the ASGE Certificate of Recognition of Quality in Endoscopy. The certificate is granted for a three-year renewable period.

About the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy

Since its founding in 1941, the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE) has been dedicated to advancing patient care and digestive health by promoting excellence and innovation in gastrointestinal endoscopy. ASGE, with more than 14,000 members worldwide, promotes the highest standards for endoscopic training and practice, fosters endoscopic research, recognizes distinguished contributions to endoscopy, and is the foremost resource for endoscopic education. Visit www.asge.org and www.screen4coloncancer.org for more information.

ASGE and Quality

ASGE is the profession's leader in setting standards of excellence in endoscopy through its safety guidelines and the training of its members so that patients receive the best and safest care possible. The Society continually reinforces the importance of quality and safety among its members through member communications, such as emails and newsletters, and its courses, including "Improving Quality and Safety in Your Endoscopy Unit."

Nationally recognized for quality care, Independence Health System comprises Butler Memorial, Clarion, Frick, Latrobe and Westmoreland Hospitals with a combined bed count of 925. With more than 1,000 physicians and advanced practice providers and 7,300 employees, the System is now the third largest in western Pennsylvania serving a population base of 750,000 in a footprint spanning more than 10 counties.

The System includes tertiary programs that are rated among America's best for cardiac care and surgery by Healthgrades in its Top 100 and Top 50 designations, and one of only five in Pennsylvania to achieve a five-star rating in cardiac surgery. In similar fashion, the prestigious Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) bestowed its top three-star rating. Historically, less than 10 percent of programs within the STS data base achieve this elite standing. The hospitals of Independence Health System also have earned a host of accolades from such prestigious outlets and sources as US News and World Report, Newsweek Magazine, the American College of Radiology, the American College of Cardiology, the American College of Surgeons, the Joint Commission, Leapfrog and the American Heart/Stroke Association.

Locally owned and locally controlled, Independence Health System offers its patients low-cost, high-quality care across the care spectrum in such specialties as cardiology, cardiovascular and thoracic surgery, orthopedics and sports medicine, minimally invasive and robotic surgery, women's health and obstetrics, emergency medicine, behavioral health and primary care. Its network of outpatient centers sees more than 1.2 million visits annually. The homecare division further supports patients at all stages of life with home health and hospice services.

Independence Health System continues to change the healthcare landscape in western Pennsylvania by meeting patient needs through superb physician expertise, outstanding nursing, the latest in technology and programmatic depth.