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Leapfrog Responds to University of Pennsylvania Study on CPOE Errors

According to a University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine study published March 9 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, computer physician order entry systems (CPOE) appear to increase risk for 22 forms of medication errors. Researchers tracked medical residents and attending physicians at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania from 2002 to 2004 using the Eclipsys TDS CPOE system. Among the findings: (1) About 75% of participants reported uncertainty about prescription drugs or dosages because they are not able to see all patient medications on one computer screen; (2) Over a quarter said that patients sometimes did not receive antibiotics on time because the system does not have a reminder function. The study is posted on JAMA's website at http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/293/10/1197.

"The Leapfrog Group stands firmly behind its recommendation that hospitals employ computer physician order entry (CPOE) systems as a key way to reduce dangerous medication errors," stated Suzanne Delbanco, CEO, The Leapfrog Group. "However, depending on a system's design or the competence and willingness of the system's users, potential errors can be made. Health care providers must therefore exercise a great amount of diligence and quality control in choosing and using computer systems."

An advisor to the study, David Bates, MD, is a leading patient safety researcher and chief of the Division of General Medicine at the Brigham and Women's Hospital. He is also Leapfrog's lead national patient safety expert for Leapfrog's CPOE safety practice ("leap"). Dr. Bates makes the following important points in putting this study into proper context:

- The study did not examine medication error rates at the hospital before the installation of the CPOE system to determine whether the system increased or decreased the rates;
- The study compiled impressions and perceptions about problems with just one computer system – one of the oldest in use today;
- In all published studies to date, CPOE has substantially reduced the medication error rate;
- The introduction of a new computer system may create some errors, but it can reduce their overall frequency as well.

About The Leapfrog Group
The Leapfrog Group was founded in November 2000 by the Business Roundtable and has support from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Leapfrog's mission is to trigger giant leaps forward in the safety, quality and affordability of health care by: supporting informed healthcare

decisions by those who use and pay for health care; and, promoting high-value health care through incentives and rewards. More than 165 Fortune 500 corporations and other large private and public sector health benefits purchasers have joined The Leapfrog Group, representing more than 36 million enrollees. Since matching a health provider's reimbursement with their performance is a key way to improve the quality of health care, Leapfrog has compiled the first free, online database of programs across the country that offer financial or non-financial rewards and incentives for improved performance. The Leapfrog Incentive and Reward Compendium is available at www.leapfroggroup.org.

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