

Severance Hospital:

Establishing a Strong Patient Safety Culture Systemwide



Opened in 1885 as the first western hospital in Korea, Severance Hospital and Yonsei University College of Medicine are part of the large Yonsei University Health System. Located in Seoul, the Severance system operates more than 2400 inpatient beds across five hospitals: the Yonsei Cancer Hospital, Rehabilitation Hospital, Cardiovascular Hospital, Eye and ENT Hospital, and Children's Hospital.

Severance Hospital has been accredited by Joint Commission International (JCI) since 2007. Preparing and staying current with JCI accreditation has helped Severance establish a strong patient safety culture within all five of their hospitals. The organization has also received accreditation from the Korea Institute for Healthcare Accreditation, renewed through the Ministry of Health and Welfare every four years.

Preparing for the survey

The biggest challenge in preparing for any accreditation is the sheer size of the Severance Hospital. With over 7000 employees, the logistics are daunting. It was no simple task to make all their staff members fully aware of patient safety policies and to educate them to comply with those policies.

To reach everyone, Severance held more than 50 education and training sessions – online and in person – not only for medical professionals but also for medical students, outsourced and contract employees. Those education sessions emphasized the International Patient Safety Goals (IPSG) compliance.

Through three mock surveys, Severance staff gathered the findings and established action plans by collaborating with relevant departments to execute improvement activities. To prepare for the most recent reaccreditation, Severance wrote new policies and revised others based on the most recent JCI accreditation standards for the Point-of-Care Testing (POCT) program, Sign Out, Antibiotic Stewardship, Risk Management Program, and more.

“We would recommend pursuing JCI accreditation to other hospitals in Korea. All their standards are proven, and by applying them, you avoid trial and error. Working toward JCI accreditation also enables you to reorganize your internal safety inspection standards to an international level. How you manage and evaluate the safety of real patients can be verified. Plus, JCI helps you keep up with global medical standards, changes in the medical environment, and the latest advancements in medical technology.”

Dr. Kang Young Lee
Director of Severance Innovation
Center

A positive survey experience

“The JCI survey itself was very helpful. The surveyors from JCI have a teaching mindset so they take the time to explain the intent of the standards,” says Dr. Kang Young Lee, Director of Severance Innovation Center. “It’s a good atmosphere. The surveyors are kind, thorough, calm and very organized. They have a very large complex to cover, so the five of them keep in touch with each other in order to cover the whole campus.”

The benefits of JCI accreditation

While preparing for JCI accreditation, Severance:

- Wrote more than 160 policies so they can provide evidence-based medical care using standardized procedures.
- Maintained over 90% of hand hygiene performance in all departments within the hospital, which helps them effectively fight against the pandemic of infectious diseases such as MERS.
- Decreased the delinquency rate of closed medical records to roughly 1% compared to the entire record.
- Developed nearly 200 Critical Pathways so far.
- Increased the number of inpatients/ outpatients/surgical cases, while decreasing the average length of stay by about two days over the last decade.

“When Korea’s National Customer Satisfaction Index (NCSI) survey was first started in 1998, the organization was in 6th place out of six hospitals,” says Dr. Lee. “However, from 2011 to 2018, we ranked #1 for eight consecutive years, which is a monumental, meaningful result. It shows not only patient safety and quality improvement but also that patient satisfaction has been increased through the JCI accreditation process.”

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With a large JCI Gold Seal on display in their main lobby, the Severance team also knows that JCI accreditation is a recognized symbol for quality and safety around the world.

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