

Statement on ACEP's Emergency Department Accreditation Program

The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) has recently announced an accreditation program to recognize emergency departments (EDs) that adhere to independently developed standards, with applications opening soon. While establishing an ED accreditation program is commendable, its dual goal must be to enhance patient care and advocate for emergency physicians (EPs).

Without thorough planning and the involvement of other established emergency medicine organizations, a well-intentioned program could inadvertently cause harm. For instance, using turnaround times for discharged and admitted patients as quality metrics without ensuring adequate staffing and ancillary services could exacerbate challenges for already under-resourced physicians. Additionally, setting supervision standards for non-physician practitioners without specifying appropriate ratios could create unrealistic expectations from hospital administrators, dilute clinical expertise, and increase pressure on EPs. Finally, large contract groups could introduce bias by highlighting the high performance of a select few of their ED contracts, aiming to secure additional contracts at the expense of local, independent, and democratically managed groups.

Further development and vetting of ACEP's proposed accreditation metrics are crucial to ensure they advocate for EPs and patient care effectively. Moreover, this initiative should not be driven by generating revenue for professional organizations. Furthermore, safeguards must be in place to protect sensitive group data from individuals with conflicts of interest, such as predatory contract group leaders on accreditation committees.

We strongly believe that developing an accreditation program should involve a coalition of stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive and unbiased approach that addresses the needs of our specialty and our physicians. A collaborative effort to review and refine ACEP's proposal before setting any standards for emergency departments is essential.