



**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact Kate Kremin
L.C. Williams & Associates
312-565-4611
kkremin@lcwa.com

AAAHC Celebrates Winners of the *Bernard A. Kershner Innovations in Quality Improvement Awards at Achieving Accreditation Conference*
2024 Honorees Demonstrated Improvement in Hepatitis C Screening and OR Cleaning Effectiveness

(Deerfield, Ill.) December 16, 2024 – The Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC) is proud to announce the winners of the 2024 *Bernard A. Kershner Innovations in Quality Improvement (QI) Awards*, unveiled yesterday at the AAAHC *Achieving Accreditation* conference’s networking reception. These prestigious awards honor excellence in ambulatory health care by recognizing organizations that have implemented effective, measurable QI initiatives that elevate patient care and safety.

Named in memory of Bernard A. Kershner, a visionary leader in ambulatory health care and distinguished past Chair of the AAAHC Institute Board of Trustees, the awards celebrate innovation, dedication, and success in QI. This year’s recipients, representing primary care and surgical/procedural care settings, exemplify how proactive QI efforts drive meaningful advancements in patient safety, operational efficiency, and care outcomes.

“We are proud to honor these distinguished organizations whose QI studies not only enhance patient care but set new standards in ambulatory health care,” said Joy Himmel, Psy.D, LCPC, NCC, RN, FACHA, AAAHC Board Chair. “We commend Tanana Chiefs Conference and Complete Surgery Mesquite for their exceptional contributions to the ambulatory care community.”

2024 Bernard A. Kershner Primary Care Winner

Tanana Chiefs Conference (Fairbanks, Alaska)

“Accelerated Hepatitis C Screening of Patient Population”

The study aimed to enhance hepatitis C (Hep C) screening and treatment among Alaska Native patients, who face disproportionately high Hep C-related death rates. Recognizing the inadequacy of prior screening guidelines, the team implemented an accelerated screening protocol starting at age 20 and repeating every 10 years. Baseline data in 2019 revealed only 15 percent of patients aged 20 plus had been screened in the past decade. A chart review identified 59 Hep C antibody-positive (Ab+) cases, with 16 new infections requiring treatment. The study led to systemic changes, including integrating prompts into electronic health records,

adding Hep C to the sexually transmitted infections (STI) screening panel, and educating providers and patients. Despite interruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts resumed in late 2022 with a new goal of initiating curative treatment within 30 days for all newly identified patients.

2024 Bernard A. Kershner Surgical/Procedural Care Winner

Complete Surgery Mesquite (Mesquite, Texas)

“Operating Room Terminal Cleaning Effectiveness Study”

This study focused on improving Operating Room Terminal Cleaning Effectiveness (ORTCE) to protect patients and care teams from surgical site infections (SSI) and health care-associated infections. Baseline evaluations revealed the current housekeeping service achieved only 20 percent cleaning effectiveness, well below the standard. Contributing factors included language barriers, inadequate training, lack of supervision, and unclear service expectations. The goal was to exceed 90 percent ORTCE by October 2023 and approach 100 percent ORTCE by mid-2024. Corrective measures included creating Spanish-language cleaning logs, providing targeted training on cleaning best practices, increasing supervision, and redefining service expectations. Performance was measured using simulated germ substances evaluated under ultraviolet (UV) light, with data findings reviewed weekly to drive continuous improvement. These efforts aim to ensure a consistently clean, safe environment for surgical patients and care teams.

“For more than twenty years, our Kershner QI Awards have inspired ambulatory health care organizations through evidence-based QI initiatives,” said Julie Lynch, MS, BSN, RN, Director, AAAHC Institute for Quality Improvement. “We look forward to showcasing these award-winning organizations and celebrating their accomplishments during our December *Achieving Accreditation* program and throughout the year.”

This year’s winning organizations demonstrate innovative approaches to screening and patient safety. AAAHC hopes their achievements encourage others to pursue their own QI journeys. As a cornerstone of AAAHC’s mission, QI remains a continuous priority for accredited ambulatory health care organizations. The Kershner QI Awards provide an opportunity to showcase how measurable, evidence-based improvements can have a lasting impact on ambulatory care delivery in primary care and surgical/procedural settings. Organizations are encouraged to participate in the 2025 Kershner QI Awards program, with study submissions opening on January 6, 2025.

To learn more about the Kershner QI Awards, please visit www.aaahc.org/quality-institute/kershner-qi-award.

#

About AAAHC

Founded in 1979, AAAHC is the leader in ambulatory health care accreditation, with more than 6,700 organizations accredited. We accredit a wide range of outpatient settings, including ambulatory surgery centers, office-based surgery facilities, endoscopy centers, student health

centers, medical and dental group practices, community health centers, employer-based health clinics, retail clinics, and Indian/Tribal health centers, among others.

AAHC advocates for the provision of high-quality health care through the development and adoption of nationally recognized standards. We provide a valuable survey experience founded on a peer-based, educational approach to onsite review. The AAHC Certificate of Accreditation, along with specialized programs including Advanced Orthopaedic Certification and Patient-Centered Medical Home Certification, demonstrates an organization's commitment to providing safe, high-quality services to its patients—every day of the 1,095-day accreditation cycle. AAHC Accreditation and Certification Programs are recognized by third-party payors, medical professional associations, liability insurance companies, state and federal agencies, and the public. For more information on AAHC, please visit www.aaahc.org.