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DeKalb Medical's Emergency Department Wins Operational Excellence Award

Atlanta, GA: DeKalb Medical's North Decatur Emergency Department (ED) has recently received the Operational Excellence award from VHA Georgia for initiating processes that have decreased wait time, improved patient satisfaction, and generated millions in new revenue for the three-hospital system.

VHA is a nationwide alliance network of healthcare organizations that share their successes and insights, helping members to become top performers.

This state recognition comes on the heels of the "Pushing Beyond" Award that the North Decatur campus received from its fellow peers of the DeKalb hospital system. The site was recognized for their ability to pull together during tough times, often working overtime to ensure patients receive the care and attention they deserve.

Collaborating with others leads to success

It takes a team of dedicated and focused physicians and nurses to pull off this level of success. And in recent years, DeKalb began working with CEP America, a national leader in developing and implementing ED programs that excel in clinical quality, service excellence, and collaborative leadership; helping to reduce wait times and improve patient satisfaction scores for their client hospitals.

Since partnering with CEP America, North Decatur has seen a significant turnaround in their ED's performance. The Operational Excellence award from VHA Georgia is a result of an exemplary "throughput" initiative which was begun in the ED two years ago, and is credited with generating \$11.5 million dollars in revenue through increased efficiency.

A total of 50 process changes have been implemented to improve patient flow as well as respond to a nationwide problem of ED overcrowding, according to Emergency Services Director, Celeste Surreira. The process changes included cross departmental collaboration that resulted in faster lab and X-ray turnaround time, a check-in system that occurs simultaneously with triage, ED waiting room greeters who continually update patients and family members on treatment progress, and flexible staffing hours.

Now, the average ED wait time at North Decatur is only 30 minutes, and 95% of patients who were surveyed this spring say they were satisfied with the promptness of service. In addition, the ED's performance surpasses the National Best Practices Standard with less than two percent of patients leaving the ED without being seen.

Surriera attributes the award to a dedicated staff that "owns the ED" and who feel empowered to *push beyond* for their patients.