



A Proposal for a Universal Definition of Medical Observation

Submitted by: ACPA Observation Committee

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The American College of Physician Advisors believes that observation services are appropriate for patients who are expected to complete their diagnostic work up and medical treatment within 24 hours in the absence of any avoidable and unnecessary delays.

If completion of the patient's diagnostic evaluation or clinical treatment in a period less than 24 hours would deviate from current medical standards of care or place the patient at an increased risk of harm, then the patient should be admitted as an inpatient at the time of initial hospitalization.

If a patient being managed via observation services has not met safe discharge end points consistent with current standards of care at 24 hours, then the patient should be admitted as an inpatient for ongoing hospital care.