



## HISCI

# Vendor Credentialing Jeopardy

By Curtis Rooney

**As Alex Trebek would ask: "What is vendor credentialing?"** The choices:

- A. An effort by hospitals to ensure that patients are safe from unauthorized visitors?
- B. An orchestrated attempt by providers to harass vendor representatives by demanding intrusive and personal answers to questions that limit their access, while collecting redundant fees from their manufacturer employers?
- C. The practice of patient care centers implementing requirements that vendors must satisfy to enter or work with a healthcare institution?
- D. All of the above?
- E. None of the above?

Most agree that the answer is C. Vendor credentialing refers to the practice of patient care centers implementing requirements that vendors must satisfy to enter or work with a healthcare institution. But there are many in the vendor community who have begun to feel like the answer could just as easily be B. Whatever the "correct" answer is, all would agree that there is a certain amount of "jeopardy" if the industry moves ahead without an appropriate understanding of the question.


A new online educational module created and distributed by the Healthcare Industry Supply Chain Institute (HISCI) attempts to do just that for its members. It takes on the issues surrounding vendor credentialing in an informative and unbiased manner in order to set the groundwork for a future solution. To accomplish this task, the Web-based program covers the following:

- Defines the issue.
- Discusses how some hospitals are currently approaching vendor credentialing.
- Identifies credential management companies and their offerings and weaknesses.
- Outlines vendor trade groups' positions on the issue.

Following each section is a quick quiz to allow viewers to test their progress and understanding.

The program is careful not to take sides, and it defines the issues from both the supplier and the provider perspectives. What becomes clear, however, is that these requirements have arisen independently and only address the needs of individual institutions or systems. The result is an absence of consistency and oversight by a recognized governing body. This means suppliers are faced with thousands of credentialing requests every year, not to mention the ensuing renewals. With supplier sales forces and support personnel numbering in the thousands, and with each of these reps calling on multiple institutions, there are significant and serious issues of redundancy, risk management and compliance.

**HISCI is a new entity made up of pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers, GPOs, distributors and other supply chain representatives that are former affiliates of the Health Industry Group Purchasing Association.**

The impetus for HISCI taking on this task grew out of a panel discussion on this important topic at the 2007 International Expo held in Palm Desert, Calif., last October. HISCI is a new entity made up of pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturers, GPOs, distributors and other supply chain representatives that are former affiliates of the Health Industry Group Purchasing Association. To obtain a copy of the module or to become a member of HISCI, go to [www.hisci-net.org](http://www.hisci-net.org). Once the industry can agree on the problem, a solution is sure to follow. 

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