

FROM THE DESK OF

Amy Tucker, MD, MHCM, Chief Medical Officer, Upstate University Hospital
Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs, College of Medicine
Vice President, Ambulatory Services and Population Health, Upstate Medical University

APRIL 2019

Dr. William Marx Appointed as Director of Surgical Services

Applies to All Physicians

I am very happy to announce the appointment of Dr. William Marx as Director of Surgical Services. Dr. Marx has served as Chief of the Division of Trauma and Acute Surgery at Upstate Medical University Hospital and as Chief of Surgery at the Veteran's Affairs Medical Center. In this new role, Dr. Marx will provide oversight of the continuum of care for surgical patients, from pre-admission testing to discharge follow up. Areas of early focus will include optimization of OR scheduling and load balancing across our OR sites to accommodate increasing demand for 5E OR rooms. He will also be involved in regulatory compliance and readiness for our upcoming DNV/CMS audit in August. Bill started in December and we are already realizing benefits in our load balancing across OR sites. Please join me in welcoming him to his new role!

Excellus Quality Score

Applies to All Physicians

A message from Stuart Wright, CPA, MBA; Chief Financial Officer...

Great news team, the results are in and because of your outstanding efforts this year, Upstate achieved a score of 99 out of 100 on its Excellus Hospital Performance Incentive Program (HPIP). This is one of the best scores we have achieved in the history of this program and does not happen without dedicated nurses, physicians and support staff who seek to continuously improve the quality of our patient care and experience. Each year the bar is raised, and your teams performed in an exemplary fashion. This year's score earned us \$3.5 million in incentive payments. Great work and please spread the news and thanks from Hospital Administration.

Clinical Documentation Improvement (CDI) Monthly Tip

Applies to All Physicians

Your monthly tip from Dr. Emily Albert & Dr. Ali Khan, Co-Directors, Clinical Documentation Improvement (CDI)...

Please remember NOT to use the phrase "in the setting of" when linking a diagnosis and a cause/contributing factor (i.e., acute blood loss anemia "in the setting of" GI bleed). Instead use words like "due to" (i.e., acute blood loss "due to" GI bleed).

Another example: **Not acceptable:** Sepsis "in the setting of" Klebsiella UTI
Acceptable: Sepsis "due to" Klebsiella UTI

Thank you from the CDI Team!

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Update on PARS / CORS

Applies to All Physicians

A message from Dr. Scott Schurman, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Director of Nephrology...

For a physician of any specialty the #1 variable correlating with risk of a medical malpractice claim is the number of patient and staff complaints about that physician. Similarly, patients of surgeons with these complaints have a greater post-operative infection rate. The Vanderbilt Center for Patient and Professional Advocacy has developed and implemented a program at dozens of Academic Medical Centers that over 20 years has reduced malpractice claims and improved patient safety.

A team from Vanderbilt was on campus February 26 – 28, 2019 to meet with leadership teams to assess technical and culture steps that will be necessary to implement this PARS/CORS program at Upstate. Vanderbilt will generate an implementation report, but feedback from the visit was positive. In particular, the program will be a partnership between University Hospital and the clinical faculty practice plans (UUMAS). A process of program education will be necessary through the organization, but there is optimism that we will begin before the end of 2019.

Capacity and Throughput Update

Applies to All Physicians

A message from Dr. Jeremy Joslin, Associate Chief Medical Officer for Capacity and Clinical Operations...

Several months ago, we introduced a tool in EPIC called “discharge delays” which allows the care team to hold a discharge until some action is completed. It also allows us to collect data on common delays at discharge. This tool has been a focus of discussion recently, and has triggered some very good questions around the optimal discharge process.

In order to standardize our discharge process, please review and adhere to the following discharge order guidelines:

1. The discharge order is for use on patients who are medically ready for discharge. It is a signed order that will be executed as soon as possible unless a valid discharge delay is entered and unresolved.
2. Discharge orders should not be capriciously written just to complete the task; additionally, nurses must never be given a verbal instruction to hold a discharge that is ordered.
3. Discharge orders may be entered and pended the evening before expected discharge day. This will “hide” the discharge order until it is signed. This is the preferred method for preparing a discharge order.

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4. A discharge delay may be entered to temporarily postpone a discharge order, but should not be used in lieu of a pending discharge order.

Observation Rates – Downtown & Community Campus Applies to All Physicians

A message from the Utilization Management Team...

Observation rates began climbing across both campuses around January 2018. In May 2018, the observation rates reached as high as 19.9% for the Downtown Campus. When the higher rates continued for several months, UM conducted a deep dive to audit the cause and implemented process improvements to improve the rates. Aside from a spike in the rate at the Community Campus in December 2018, the observation rates across both campuses have been trending down to the appropriate rate. The UM department has implemented many initiatives that focus on process improvement and staff engagement. Initiatives include:

- ❖ Adjusted UM staff work flow to ensure all observation cases are reviewed.
- ❖ Consensus from Hospital Administration to refer increased volumes to a vendor for second level review for level of care.
- ❖ Increased education to UM staff and physicians that “2-Midnights” is only for straight Medicare and should not be used to determine level of care for other Payors.
- ❖ Increased efforts to schedule peer-to-peer reviews with Payor Medical Directors and work more collaboratively with our contracted Payors to ensure the correct level of care is assigned.
- ❖ Worked closely with Information Management and Technology (IMT) to establish edits or rules for level of care in Epic and to enhance existing edits to help control the process surrounding Medicare’s Inpatient (IP) only rules.
- ❖ Using queries developed by IMT, the UM Leadership Team is able to quickly find cases billed as “Obs” that had no UM review or had a review but were assigned the incorrect level of care. Leadership then reviews the cases with individual staff for education.

Electronic Death Registry System

Applies to All Physicians

A message from Beth Erwin, Director, Medical Staff Services...

New York State requires that deaths be registered online through the Electronic Death Registry System (EDRS). To certify a death, physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants must have a health commerce system (HCS)

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account; this is the same account used to update your New York State profile online. Instructions for applying are attached.

Application is done online: <https://apps.health.ny.gov/pub/top.html>

Instruction in using the EDRS is available online: https://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/edrs/ (training information is at the bottom of the page).

QuantiFERON TB Testing

Applies to All Physicians

A message from Dr. Sylva Bem, Director of Immunology...

Effective December 27, 2018; the Upstate Immunology Laboratory started in-house testing with QuantiFERON TB Gold Plus (QFT-Plus) to aid in the diagnosis of Mycobacterium tuberculosis infection. The test measures the cell mediated immune response to peptide antigens that simulate mycobacterial proteins. Testing is performed 2-3 times per week at the present time.

Advantages:

- This test requires a single patient visit to conduct the test.
- Prior BCG vaccination does not cause a false positive interferon-gamma release assay.

Limitations:

- Results of the testing must be used in conjunction with each individual's epidemiology history, current medical status, and other diagnostic evaluations.
- Negative results must be considered with the individual's medical and historic data relevant to probability of M. tuberculosis infection and potential risk of progression to tuberculosis disease, particularly for individuals with impaired immune function.
 - Negative predictive values are likely to be low for persons suspected to have M. tuberculosis disease and should not be relied on to exclude disease.
- A diagnosis of LTBI requires that tuberculosis disease must be excluded by medical evaluation including an assessment of current medical and diagnostic tests for disease as indicated.

For CDC publications and recommendations on TB testing, please follow:

<https://www.cdc.gov/tb/publications/guidelines/default.htm>

For Updated Guidelines for Using Interferon Gamma Release Assay to Detect Mycobacterium tuberculosis, please follow the CDC Recommendation: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr5905.pdf>

Tests can be ordered under EPIC code LAB8962.

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C. difficile Algorithm

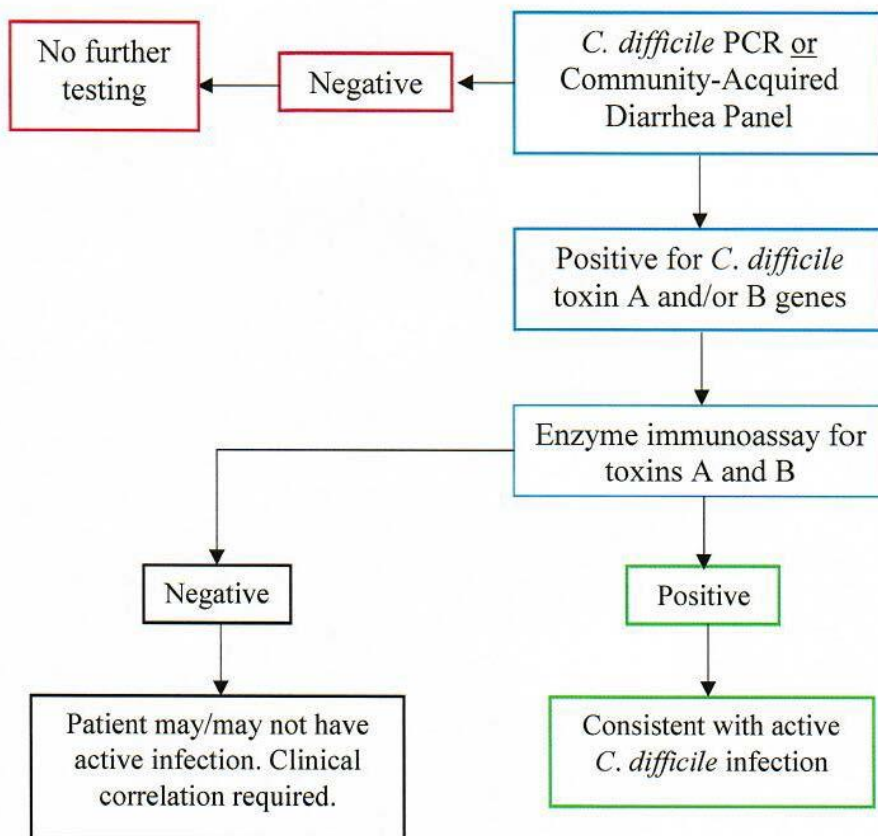
Applies to All Physicians

A message from Scott Riddell, PhD, Director of Microbiology...

The detection of *C. difficile* toxin genes by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) may represent colonization rather than infection. To assist in the clinical interpretation of molecular testing, on March 4, 2019, the University Hospital (UH) Microbiology Laboratory began automatically performing toxin testing on PCR-positive specimens. This supplemental testing applies to both the stand-alone *C. difficile* PCR and the Community-Acquired Diarrhea Panel. No further testing will be performed for PCR-negative specimens.

Specimens that are both PCR- and toxin-positive are consistent with active disease while clinical correlation is required for PCR-positive/toxin-negative results.

The toxin test result is included in the PCR report and performed within 24 hours of PCR result. No change to the current ordering process is required.



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Outstanding Physician Comments

Applies to All Physicians

Comments from grateful patients receiving care on the units and clinics at Upstate:

Adult Emergency Department: **Dr. Jeremy Joslin** was kind, caring and very helpful. **Dr. Jeremy Joslin** – great!

Adult Hematology Oncology: **Dr. Teresa Gentile** – excellent, spent a lot of time answering questions and checking to make sure all was going well. **Dr. Stephen Graziano** is an excellent physician who explains the treatment plan very clearly. He makes me feel like I am well taken care of. **Dr. Adham Jurdhi** – thank you!

Adult Medicine: **Dr. Joyce Farah** – always an all-star!

Breast Care Center: **Dr. Jayne Charlamb** is the physician I have been waiting for. I am incredibly thankful for her patience, understanding and care. **Dr. Prashant Upadhyaya** – incredibly supportive, open-minded, and listened. I will wholeheartedly recommend him to everyone.

Cardiac Rehab: **Dr. Robert Carhart** – exceptional, always professional and explained everything.

Center for Children's Surgery: **Dr. Aamer Imdad** – pleasant, thorough, timely. **Dr. Jennifer Stanger** made it a point to ensure the best decisions were made for my son. I felt like she put her heart into his care. Very nice woman.

Emergency Department @ Community Campus: **Dr. Christine Courtney** – very nice.

Family Medicine: **Dr. Clyde Satterly** listens, expresses sincere empathy and is a real class act. I have been seeing **Dr. Clyde Satterly** for many years and I hope to see him many more. I couldn't ask for a more compassionate and caring doctor than **Dr. Kaushal Nanavati**.

Joslin Center for Diabetes: **Dr. Marisa Desimone** – impressive! **Dr. Ruban Dhaliwal** is always patient with me and takes extra time to resolve all of my concerns. I have extreme confidence in her. **Dr. Rachel Hopkins** is a good match for me and my needs, is willing to listen to my concerns and offers valuable suggestions and information. **Dr. Roberto Izquierdo** has been excellent for me. He listens and is truthful. **Dr. Roberto Izquierdo** is a most caring, decent doctor and human being. **Dr. Roberto Izquierdo** could not have been better! I really liked him! **Dr. Lauren Lipeski** is an excellent doctor. I am very happy to have her for my son's health care. She is very thorough in explaining the condition and reading levels to me that I can comfortably say that I leave the appointment with thoroughly understanding my



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son's medical diagnosis. **Dr. Beth anne Piper** is excellent. She is easy to talk to and encouraging. **Dr. Beth anne Piper** is an excellent doctor. She helped me realize the importance of my health and was able to help me mentally and emotionally. I thank God that she has come into my life to help me. She is excellent. **Dr. Ruth Weinstock** is one of the best doctors I have ever had. She is competent, cares, listens, and is always interested. I am fortunate to have her for my doctor. **Dr. Ruth Weinstock** is the best! She gave me her time, attention, and listened to all I had to say. **Dr. Ruth Weinstock** has been my doctor for years and never fails to impress me. She has always been thorough and exceptional in providing care. I have NEVER felt rushed and ALWAYS feel that the appointment has been successful. **Dr. Ruth Weinstock** is fabulous! **Dr. Ruth Weinstock** – my health excels under her care. She is always interested, answers questions, gives me time and shows she cares. **Dr. Ruth Weinstock** – knowledgeable. **Dr. Ruth Weinstock** – the best!

Medicine Subspecialities: **Dr. Eduardo Bonilla** always treats me with the upmost respect – love him! **Dr. Eduardo Bonilla** is always attentive, considerate and never rushed. **Dr. Anil Ghimire** always listens to me. **Dr. Hom Neupane** listens to me and tries to pinpoint and address my problems. He is very kind and professional. **Dr. Hom Neupane** is always professional and compassionate. **Dr. Hom Neupane** is a very knowledgeable, compassionate, extremely good physician. So glad that I am in his care. We enjoy seeing **Dr. Hom Neupane**. He has made a difference in my quality of health and is an excellent provider. **Dr. Hom Neupane** is an excellent physician. In addition to being a competent pulmonologist, **Dr. Birendra Sah** is quite personable. **Dr. Dana Savici** is always attentive, informative and sensitive. I feel very fortunate to have her as part of my team. **Dr. Ahmed Shawkat** – very respectful.

Radiation Oncology: **Dr. Jeffrey Bogart** – very thorough and willing to answer questions completely.

Radiology – CG: **Dr. Tomas Mujo** – the best!

Surgery – UH LL022: Meeting **Dr. G. Randall Green** for the first time, I felt very confident with his explanations and decisions for me. **Dr. G. Randall Green** was a very compassionate doctor who made me feel at ease and hopeful.

The Surgery Center – CG: **Dr. John Fatti** and **Dr. Eileen Simiele** couldn't have been more attentive – excellent care! **Dr. Mary Ellen Greco** was wonderful with me. She is the best in my mind and I am very happy I have her for my doctor. **Dr. Prashant Upadhyaya** – thank you!

UHCC Neurology: **Dr. Anuradha Duleep** – best neurologist I have seen. **Dr. Anuradha Duleep** – kind and caring. I am happy to give **Dr. Anuradha Duleep** the very highest recommendation and approval. The course of treatment that she has prescribed has helped me tremendously. **Dr. Anuradha Duleep** is one of the best professionals I have ever encountered. I am happy to be her patient. **Dr. Burk Jubelt** has a great bedside manner and is easy to talk to. **Dr. Melissa Ko** is amazing and I would recommend her to anyone. **Dr. Luis Mejico** – best doctor ever, very compassionate

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and caring. **Dr. Michael Vertino** – his caring and warm manner helps to cope with difficult situation. **Dr. Michael Vertino** is always kind, upbeat, caring and knowledgeable.

University Cardiology: **Dr. Avneet Singh** – I know I am in good hands. **Dr. Avneet Singh** is a terrific physician, courteous and friendly, professional and knowledgeable. He is willing to listen and discuss treatment options with me in order to design a treatment plan that fits me. I feel very comfortable having him as my cardiologist. **Dr. Tamas Szombathy** is so good. He is a gem and I have recommended him to a number of people as the best! **Dr. Tamas Szombathy** – the best, listens, teaches all the time in his comments, includes the patient in their care, laughs and is personable.

University Center for Vision Care: **Dr. Robert Swan** deserves an A+ rating, excellent physician and a genuinely nice person too. I can't say enough good about **Dr. Robert Swan**. University Hospital is very lucky to have him. I travel 2 ½ hours to see **Dr. Robert Swan**. He is very educated, up to date on the technology in his field and is very attentive.

University Geriatricians: **Dr. Andrea Berg** is always concerned about health and well-being. **Dr. Sharon Brangman** – very knowledgeable and caring. I am so extremely impressed with **Dr. Sharon Brangman**. She is warm, caring, positive, reassuring and an excellent doctor.

University Internists: **Dr. Vincent Frechette** – courteous, experienced and empathetic. I have a great deal of respect for **Dr. Vincent Frechette**. He is a great listener, is attentive to my needs and explains things well. I am fortunate to have him as my primary care physician. **Dr. Vincent Frechette** – takes his time, is kind, listens and cares. **Dr. Vincent Frechette** always listens to everything I say and my confidence in him is high. There is no one better than **Dr. Vincent Frechette**. I always look forward to my visits with him. **Dr. Vincent Frechette** is kind, understanding, efficient, and comfortable to be around. **Dr. Vincent Frechette** is one of the best physicians I have ever had. He never rushed me and my questions were welcomed. **Dr. Barbara Krenzer** is an outstanding internist. **Dr. Barbara Krenzer** is so kind, empathetic, knowledgeable and professional. **Dr. Barbara Krenzer** is the best and most thorough doctor I have ever had. I hear back from her, promptly, and am lucky to be placed in her care. **Dr. Barbara Krenzer** creates a wonderful environment for open conversation about medical concerns. I feel like I can talk to her about anything and that she is genuinely concerned. **Dr. Sarah Lappin** – friendly and courteous. **Dr. Suman Swarnkar** is a #1 MD! I trust her completely. She is very comprehensive and treats me as an individual. **Dr. Suman Swarnkar** always treats me with the utmost care and kindness, is an excellent listener to my concerns and has excellent communication skills. **Dr. Suman Swarnkar** was very impressive. She seemed genuinely concerned about what was going on with my health and was very well informed about the conditions that could be related to my symptoms. I felt very comfortable with **Dr. Suman Swarnkar**. She treated me with respect.

University Pediatric & Adolescent Center: **Dr. Alicia Pekarsky** is an exceptional physician. She goes above and beyond to make myself and my kids feel at ease and addresses all concerns. She is very caring, intelligent, and knowledgeable. **Dr. Karen Teelin** – outstanding and answers all of my questions right away.



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Upstate Community OB/GYN: **Dr. MaryAnn Millar** – wonderful! **Dr. MaryAnn Millar** – awesome! **Dr. MaryAnn Millar** is great. **Dr. MaryAnn Millar** – very attentive and kind. **Dr. Howard Weinstein** – always courteous, easy to talk to, and explains things to you. **Dr. Edith Westpfal** is wonderful, listens, explains and is respectful. **Dr. Edith Westpfal** really took time and explained my condition very well. **Dr. Edith Westpfal** is always very professional and an excellent listener.

Upstate Outpatient Surgery Center: **Dr. Matthew Mason** was great at explaining planned procedure.

Upstate Urology: **Dr. Stephen Blakely** is and has always been trying to make my “quality of life” the best it can be. **Dr. Stephen Blakely** has always given me as much time as needed during my appointments. He answers every question and even draw diagrams when needed to help explain what, where, why and how procedures are done. He is always concerned with my physical and emotional health. **Dr. Gennady Bratslavsky** is a great physician in every way. **Dr. Zahi Makhuli** is very dependable and always available. **Dr. Dmitriy Nikolavsky** – the GREATEST!!! **Dr. Dmitriy Nikolavsky** – perfect, amazing, and would highly recommend. **Dr. Oleg Shapiro** is an excellent physician. **Dr. Oleg Shapiro** puts his patients at ease about upcoming surgeries and is as thorough as he can possible be. **Dr. Oleg Shapiro** – caring and outstanding care giver. **Dr. Oleg Shapiro** – very kind, direct and explained my situation in great detail. Very good experience with **Dr. Oleg Shapiro**. **Dr. J Trussell** – top of the list of medical providers that I use.

Urology @ Community Campus: **Dr. Rakesh Khanna** was concerned, thoughtful, took his time and explained things to me. He truly wants to help and it shows. I was very pleased!

2East @ Community Campus: **Dr. Kenneth Rhee** admitted me on a Tuesday and was not there when I delivered on Thursday. On Saturday he came to meet my daughter. That level of care from someone that is not my regular physician is amazing!

4North @ Community Campus: **Dr. Ediri Brume** and **Dr. Amishi Desai** – excellent! **Dr. Matthew Glidden** took the time to explain all results with a late afternoon phone call (after discharge) and was instrumental in moving up a follow-up procedure. **Dr. Kan Liu** was amazing, attentive and caring.

05A: **Dr. Jeffrey Albright** – very caring, kind and always smiling. **Dr. Moustafa Hassan** – very attentive. **Dr. Taewan Kim** is amazing! I can’t thank him enough for all he has done!

06A: **Dr. Vincent Frechette** – wonderful! **Dr. Vincent Frechette** – great bedside manner, personal and very thorough in his explanations. **Dr. Bernard Poiesz** – very helpful.

06B: **Dr. Brian Changlai** – very good.

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6th Floor @ Community Campus: **Dr. Emil Azer** does a great job! **Dr. Timothy Damron** was wonderful at explaining what he did and his concern with my complications. **Dr. Robert Sherman** ROCKS! **Dr. Scott Van Valkenburg** – wonderful support!

6H: **Dr. Harvir Singh Gambhir** – always available. **Dr. Birendra Sah** – great!

7A: **Dr. Emil Azer** – very good. I felt very lucky to have **Dr. Matthew Sullivan** do my surgery. **Dr. Richard Tallarico** did a great job and kept me informed.

9G: **Dr. Amit Dhamoon** – super kind, caring, talked to me like a person and listened to all my questions, concerns and needs.

10G: **Dr. Amit Dhamoon** – sincere concern for illness, treatment and recovery. **Dr. Mashaal Dhir** inspired confidence in me and visited me every day with updates. **Dr. Vincent Frechette** – wonderful. I felt I knew exactly what was going on when he was making his hospital visits. **Dr. Geetanjali Johri** – excellent, took the time to hear from me, professional – thank you!

11E: **Dr. Tamer Ahmed** was amazing!! Very thankful for his expertise and caring. **Dr. Tamer Ahmed** is the best doctor I have ever had.

11G: **Dr. Robert Sherman** is an angel, he saved our son's life.

12E: **Dr. Matthew Mittiga** – incredibly helpful and never made us feel rushed when talking to him. **Dr. Andrea Shaw** – amazing, caring and listened to what we had to say. I felt like my child was in excellent hands.



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Paperless HCS Medical Professions Account

The Health Commerce System (HCS) Medical Professions account request has gone paperless! No more signatures and notary. Applying for an HCS account is as simple as filling out an online form and having a NYS DMV Driver License or NYS DMV Non-driver Photo ID. Medical Professionals that do not have a NYS DMV Driver License or NYS DMV Non-driver Photo ID can still apply for an HCS medical professions account using the existing process which requires signatures and a notary.

Important information!

To enroll using the paperless process you must have a:

- NYS DMV Driver License or NYS DMV Non-driver Photo ID
- NYS Education Department registered medical professional license

Where do I go to apply for an HCS account?

1. Open your web browser and enter this website in the address bar

<https://apps.health.ny.gov/pub/top.html>

How do I apply for an account?

1. Click '**Apply**' for an HCS Medical Professions account'
2. Click '**I have a NYS DMV driver license or NYS DMV Non-driver Photo ID**'

NOTE: If you do not have a NYS driver license, you can still apply by clicking 'I do not have a NYS DMV driver license or NYS DMV Non-driver Photo ID'

HCS Enrollment Form for Medical Professionals

Do you have a NYS Driver License or NYS Non-Driver Photo ID?

- **I have a NYS Driver's License or Non-Driver Photo ID**
- **I do not have a NYS Driver's License or Non-Driver Photo ID**

This process is by handcopy and can take up to seven business days to obtain an HCS account.

3. Enter your medical profession information, click **Submit**
Important! Your first and last name, license type, Professional license number, and SSN must match what is in the NYSED Office of the Professions
4. Enter your DMV information from your driver license or non-driver photo ID exactly as it appears on your driver's license, click **Submit**
Important! Your first and last name, license number, date of birth, gender, and zip code must match what is on your NYS driver license or NYS Non-driver photo ID
5. Enter your contact information (fields marked with an asterisk are required)
6. Agree to the terms outlined in the Security and Use Policy (SAUP), check the box, and **Submit**
7. Create your new password, confirm the password, click **Submit**
8. Congratulations, you have an HCS account. Keep your userid as it will be required for all HCS access

How do I sign on the HCS?

1. Click the HCS website link in your congratulations page when applying OR your congratulations email that you received

<https://commerce.health.state.ny.us>

2. Enter your **User ID** in the appropriate field
3. Enter your **Password** in the appropriate field
4. Click **Sign in**