

# Tracer Methodology

# Tracer Methodology- A Systems Approach to Evaluation

- The approach, known as the tracer methodology, traces a number of patients through the organization's entire health care process
- As cases are examined, the surveyor may identify performance issues in one or more steps of the process – or in the interfaces between processes

# Tracer Methodology

- Process surveyors use during on-site survey
- Initially, uses identified Priority Focus Areas and clinical / service groups

# Objectives of Tracer Activity

- Follow course of care and services provided to the patient/client/resident
- Assess relationships among disciplines and important functions
- Evaluate performance of processes relevant to the individual

# Tracer Selection Criteria

- Identified Clinical/Service Groups from PFP
- Patient/Client/Resident who received complex services (often those close to discharge)
- Patient/Client/Resident who cross different programs (such as hospital and long term care)
- Patient/Client/Resident who relate to systems tracers
  - Infection Control
  - Medication Management

# Selecting Tracer Patients

- Example of additional criteria for hospitals
  - Complex Situations
    - ICU
    - ED
    - Anesthesia Services
    - Labor and Delivery
    - 23 hour admit

# Tracer Activity

- Comprises 50 – 60% of on-site survey time
- Will be approximately 90 minutes in length (but can be up to 3 hours)
- Starts in setting/unit where tracer patient/client/resident is located
- May include sequential following of course of care – but no mandated order for visits to other care areas

# Tracer Visits Include

- Evaluation of top 4-5 Priority Focus Areas identified in PFP
- Observation of direct care
- Observation of medication process
- PI discussion – staff level
- Staff interviews
- Patient interviews
- Observation of infection control practices
- Observation of environment of care elements

## Tracer Visits Include (cont'd)

- Review of open clinical records
- Review of policies as needed
- Education at various points – flexible

# Tracer Visits May Include

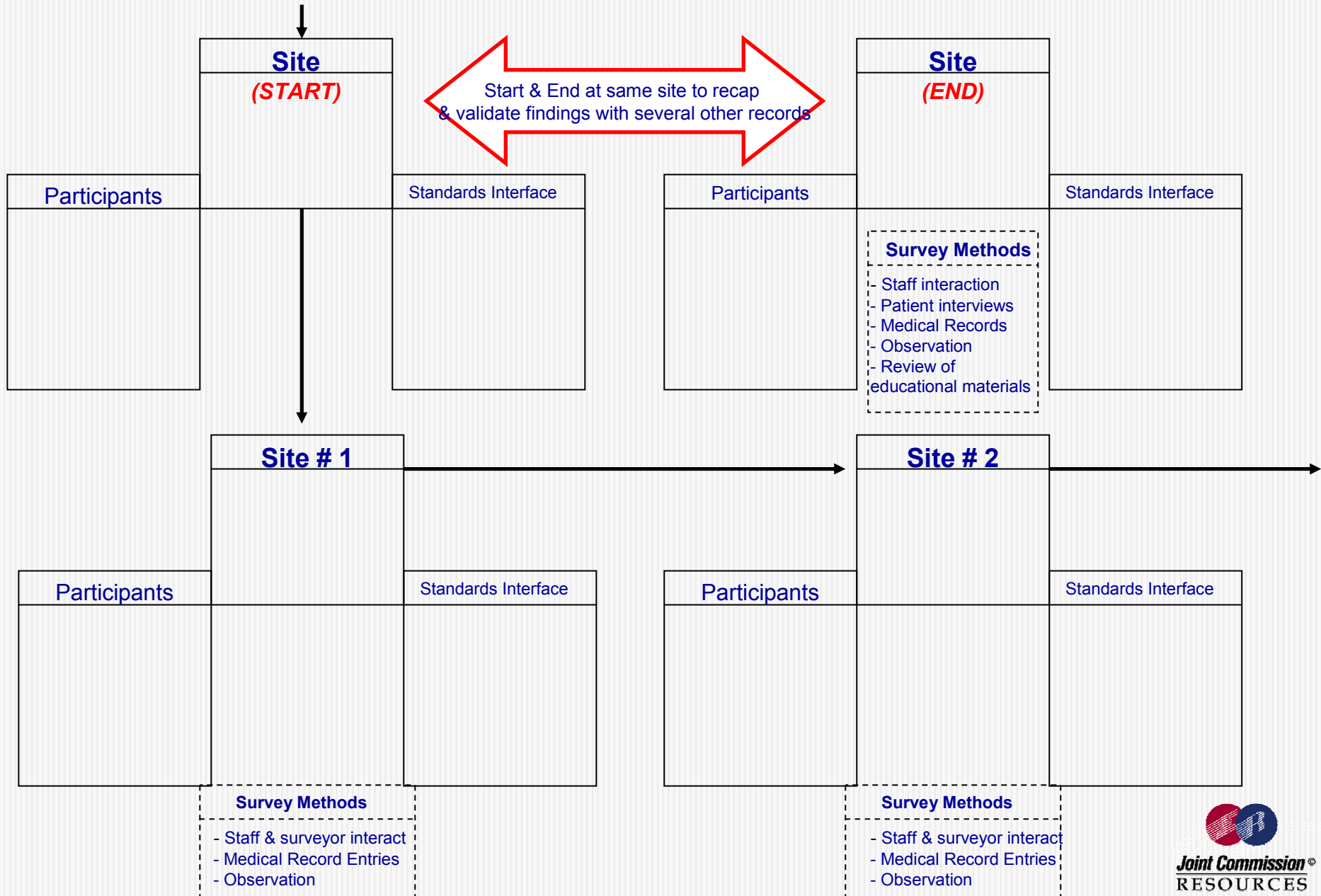
- Unit tour – incorporate with Tracer
- Site visits, prioritize based on risk
- Pharmacy visit
- Other patient care areas
- Interdisciplinary team review
- Review of additional clinical records (closed)

# Systems Analysis

- Set of components that work together toward common goal
- Evaluation of how and how well systems function
- Addresses interrelationships of elements
- Translates standards compliance issues into potential vulnerabilities

**Map of Tracer**

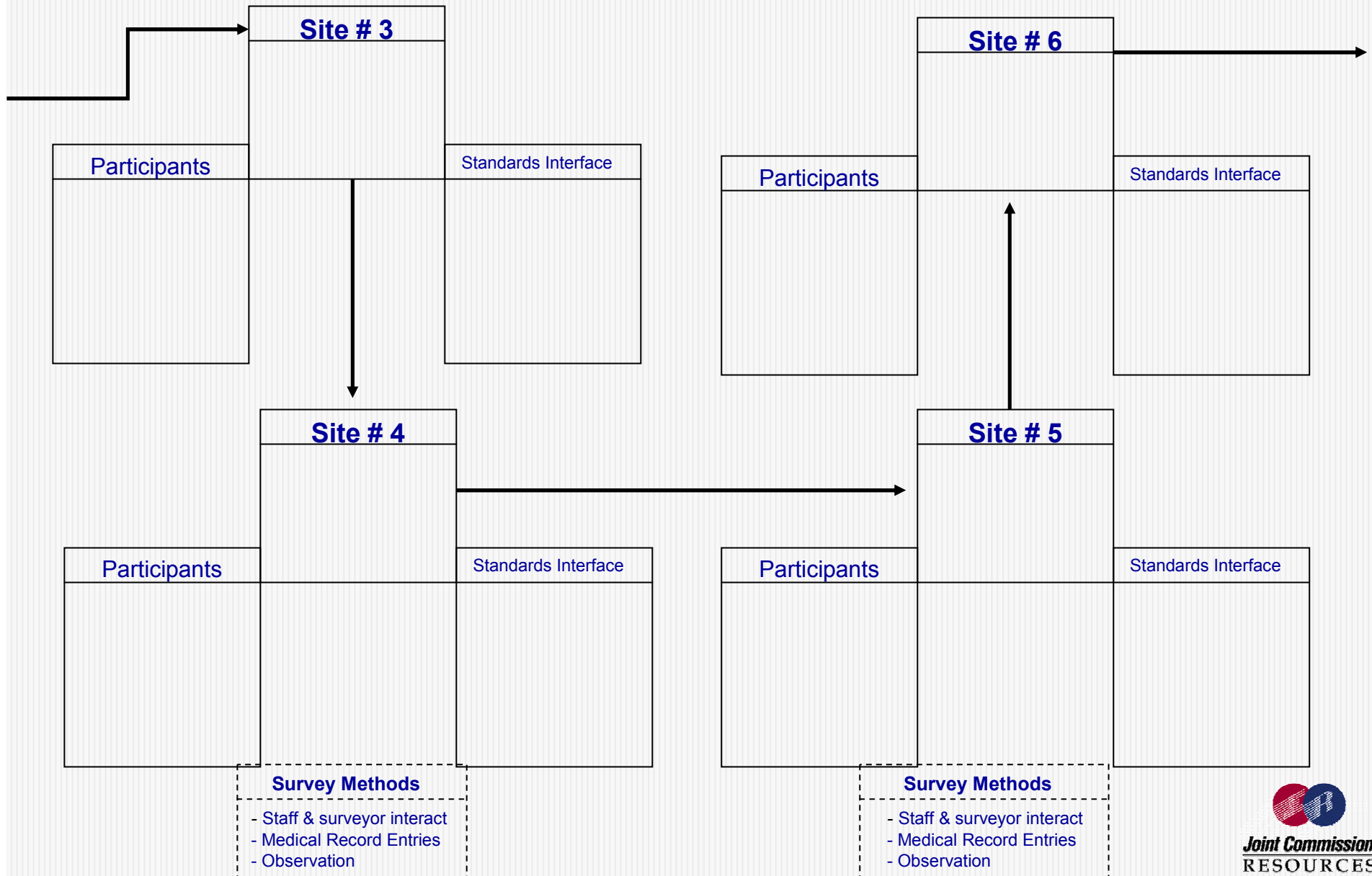
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Medical Record Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital: \_\_\_\_\_ Surveyor: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Clinical Service Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Rationale for Tracer Selection: \_\_\_\_\_



Map of Tracer *continued...*

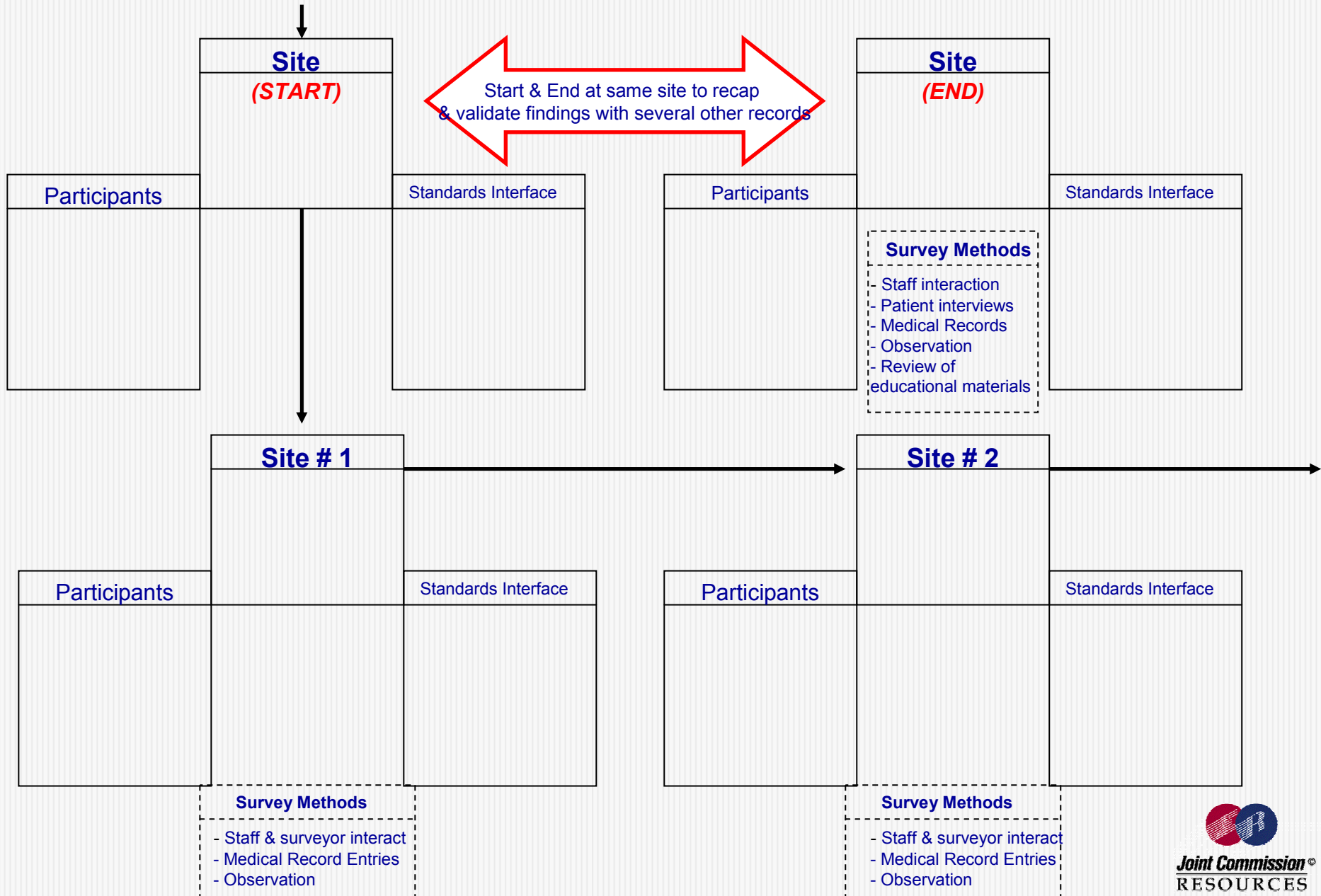
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Medical Record Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Clinical Service

Group: \_\_\_\_\_



**Map of Tracer**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Medical Record Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital: \_\_\_\_\_ Surveyor: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Clinical Service Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Rationale for Tracer Selection: \_\_\_\_\_



# Questions?