

Consumer-Purchaser DISCLOSURE PROJECT

Better information. Better decisions. Better health.

Consumers and Purchasers Welcome the Nation's First National Quality Strategy for Improving Health and Health Care

March 21, 2011

Consumers and purchasers applaud the release of the *National Strategy for Quality Improvement in Healthcare*, which was submitted to Congress on March 20 by Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius. The report marks the first time that HHS has outlined a framework for how to improve the nation's health care system by eliminating patient harms, reducing waste, and applying innovations in technology and care delivery, with the goals of providing all consumers with the right care at the right time in the most appropriate setting. The vision outlined in this report is one of a patient-centered system that: prioritizes patients and their families; supports broad implementation and meaningful use of health information technology to provide more coordinated care; relies on evidence to provide the highest quality care to patients; and addresses the needs of communities to support improvements in health for the population at large.

Among the many quality-improvement related initiatives and programs written into the Affordable Care Act was the requirement that HHS submit a report to Congress outlining a detailed strategy for how it would work within the agency to promote activities for the purposes of quality improvement. The final report meets this challenge by outlining the three aims that will be used to guide and assess local, state and national efforts, including improving overall quality through patient-centered care, improving population health by addressing behavioral, social, and environmental elements of health care, and making care affordable for consumers and employers in the public and private sectors.

In October 2010, consumers and purchasers provided HHS with [feedback](#) on the draft quality strategy, focusing on the need for specific goals that the system should aim to meet in terms of quality improvement, patient safety, and cost reduction. "The framework outlined in the National Quality Strategy represents HHS' strong commitment to using quality as a lever for improving care for all consumers, reducing costs, and making patient safety and population health paramount. This is a call for all stakeholders, including providers, payers, and of course consumers and purchasers, to work together to see the goal of an affordable, patient-centered health system to fruition," said Debra L. Ness, Co-chair of the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project and President of the National Partnership for Women & Families.

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Central to the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project's mission, and highlighted in the report, is the importance of publicly reporting information that allows consumers and purchasers to review treatment outcomes, assess patient experience, compare costs, and hold providers accountable. Also highlighted in the report is the need to transform the system so that individuals and patients are able to play an active role in their own care -- including a focus on shared decision-making -- and giving patients access to their personal health care information so they can work with providers to coordinate their care and make decisions based on their preferences. The Disclosure Project strongly supports and advocates for payment policies that reflect these elements of the National Quality Strategy, encouraging the use of quality measures that reflect patient outcomes (including functional status), care coordination and transitions, shared decision-making, and patient experience across public and private sector payment policies.

"We are eager to work with HHS as it develops the metrics and goals that will be needed bring the National Quality Strategy's vision to a reality. Our members are dedicated to advancing the use of performance measurement for the purposes of helping consumers and employers become more active users and purchasers of care, as well as for improving health outcomes and reducing today's upward cost spiral," said Bill Kramer, Executive Director and Co-chair of the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project and National Policy Director for the Pacific Business Group on Health.

As we celebrate the first anniversary of the Affordable Care Act, we look forward to using the National Quality Strategy's framework to guide our efforts at moving the goal posts and creating a health care system that provides high-quality, affordable, safe, efficient, effective, patient-centered care.

The Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project is broad coalition, dedicated to improving the quality and affordability of health care in America for consumers and health care purchasers. The project's mission is to put the patient in the driver's seat—to share useful information about provider performance so that patients can make informed choices and the health care system can better reward the best performing providers. The coalition is comprised of consumer organizations, leading national and local employers and labor organizations. The Disclosure Project is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation along with support from participating organizations. For more information contact questions@healthcaredisclosure.org or visit our website at www.healthcaredisclosure.org.