

Consumer-Purchaser

**DISCLOSURE**

**PROJECT**

Improving Health Care Quality through Public Reporting of Performance

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### **Consumers, Health Care Purchasers Applaud Agreement On Physician Performance Reporting**

NEW YORK -- The Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project — a group of leading consumer, labor and employer organizations working to ensure that all Americans have access to publicly reported health care performance information — applauds today's agreement between the Attorney General of New York and Cigna Healthcare to foster better reporting of physician performance. This important agreement will allow physician performance measurement and reporting to proceed in New York with full transparency and to be guided by nationally recognized standards.

The current health care system often leaves consumers in the dark. There is wide variation in performance among physicians yet there is a dearth of information available to help consumers navigate to those who provide the best quality care. Consumers simply cannot make informed choices in an environment where transparency is not the rule.

"Improved transparency about performance will improve both quality and affordability. Consumers will be able to drive improvement by using valid performance information to choose providers and treatments. Meanwhile, purchasers will be able to build performance expectations into their contracts and benefit designs. This will also give providers information they can use to constantly improve the quality of care they deliver," said Arthur A. Levin, M.P.H., director of the Center for Medical Consumers.

Programs that measure and report on the quality of physician practices are critical tools needed to help improve the health outcomes of patients, create a more efficient health system, and ultimately expand access to health care.

"Consumers today have very little information to help them choose doctors or understand the quality of care they receive. This agreement is an important step toward making sure that New Yorkers have meaningful information about quality and cost to help them make sound decisions about where they get their care and how they spend their health care dollars," said Debra Ness, president of the National Partnership for Women & Families and co-chair of the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project. "We are particularly appreciative of the Attorney General's willingness to work closely with this broad coalition in crafting a solution that is in the best interests of consumers."

"Today's agreement is a great model for how health plans should conduct physician measurement and reporting programs," said Peter V. Lee, CEO of the Pacific Business Group on Health and co-chair of the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project. "Employers across the country can look to this agreement as a framework for how to assure that their health plans are meeting the needs of

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their employees. In particular, I applaud the agreement's reliance on widely accepted national measurement standards."

Karen Nelson MD, a primary care physician and CEO/Medical Director, UNITE-HERE Health Center, said "This agreement will allow us to measure both quality and cost. Failure to deal with cost issues directly would have dealt a heavy blow to hopes for achieving universal health coverage in New York and the rest of America. We simply must rein in costs if we ever hope to cover more people. But the fact is, there are wide variations in spending in the health care system—and yet no connection between more spending and higher quality." UNITE-HERE union represents more than 450,000 active workers, primarily in the apparel, textile, industrial laundry, hotel, casino and food service industries, as well as 400,000 retirees throughout North America.

In addition, most physicians do not have access to the information necessary to support efforts to improve their practices. And, historically physicians have not been rewarded for providing higher quality care. Today's agreement clears the way for performance measurement and reporting that will begin to address these problems. The agreement addresses critical aspects of measurement programs because it will:

- Ensure that measurement is a transparent process so that both consumers and physicians can understand the basis upon which performance is being measured and reported.
- Ensure that measurement is based on sound national standards and methodology.
- Enable consumers to make more informed decisions based on both quality and cost, this includes providing adequate guidance about how to use the information and any limitations in the data.
- Provide physicians with information that helps them improve the quality of care they provide.
- Ensure that physicians have adequate notice and opportunity to correct any errors. No surprises. No black boxes.
- Ensure that both consumers and physicians have input into the measurement process and how results are reported. This will help ensure that information is meaningful to consumers.

"Consumers support clear standards that foster transparency and accountability in a health plan's physician performance reporting programs. Our support for standards grows out of the knowledge that the quality of health care varies dramatically. We believe that consumers should have meaningful and valid information to assess and make informed decisions about their physicians and the care they receive," said Chuck Bell, Programs Director for Consumers Union, the publisher of Consumer Reports, based in Yonkers, New York.

The Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project is an initiative that is improving health care quality and affordability by advancing public reporting of provider performance information so it can be used for improvement, consumer choice, and as part of payment reform. The Project is a collaboration of leading national and local employer, consumer, and labor organizations whose shared vision is for Americans to be able to select hospitals, physicians, and treatments based on nationally standardized measures for clinical quality, consumer experience, equity, and efficiency. The Project is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation along with support from participating organizations. For more information visit our website at <http://healthcaredisclosure.org/>.

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