

Healthcare Quality Watch

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NEWS BRIEFS FOR
MANAGERS AND
OPINION LEADERS



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IPRO Begins New Three-Year QIO Contract

Under a new three-year Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) contract that began August 1, IPRO will be focusing on four major themes or "Aims" including: (1) enhancing beneficiary and family-centered care, (2) improving individual patient care, (3) integrating care for populations and communities and (4) improving the overall health of populations and communities, via prevention. In the case of the first theme, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is working toward a more centralized approach to review of complaints and appeals, beginning with a single intake and triage process for written quality-of-care complaints lodged by patients and their families. In terms of improving individual patient care, IPRO will work with New York hospitals to sharply reduce health-care associated infections; with nursing homes to reduce pressure ulcers, physical restraints and infections; and with practitioners and professionals to reduce adverse drug events. Care integration work will require IPRO to recruit at least seven communities across the state to work on improving transitions and reducing re-hospitalizations. IPRO's work on behalf of populations and communities will include improving rates of immunization, vaccination, cancer screening, and other preventive services. Additionally, IPRO will support office-based physicians in quality reporting, cardiac health and the use of electronic health records. CMS is emphasizing close alignment among the new QIO workplan, the National Quality Strategy and the Partnership for Patients. For a complete description of the QIO "10th Scope of Work," visit www.cms.gov and click on "quality of care." For more on IPRO's care transitions work, see article on page 2.

Feds Promote Quality Report Cards

The U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality (AHRQ), has created three new audio podcasts to support public and private-sector performance reporting initiatives. Housed on AHRQ's "Talking Quality" website, the podcasts address:

(1) how report card developers can use social media to attract user audiences; (2) how to develop a brand identity for a performance reporting initiative; and (3) how a newly-created Institute is going about rating the quality of various report card efforts around the U.S. The first podcast interviews social media experts from the Massachusetts Health Quality Partners, while the second includes an interview with an official from the Greater Detroit Area Health Council. The third podcast includes an interview with performance reporting expert Carol Cronin, founder of the Informed Patient Institute (IPI), which offers letter grades on report cards in use around the nation, based on standardized criteria addressing such issues as usability, interactivity and comprehensiveness. The IPI site is located at www.informedpatientinstitute.org. (The nursing home performance report card that IPRO created and manages for the New York State Department of Health at <http://nursinghomes.nyhealth.gov> received a letter grade of "A" from IPI) To access the recordings, go to <http://talkingquality.ahrq.gov>.

IPRO's Oversight Extends to NJ, LA and PR

IPRO has added two more states and a U.S. territory to the list of local governments for which it provides Medicaid managed care oversight. Under the federally-supported External Quality Review Organization (EQRO) authority, independent organizations analyze the performance of Medicaid managed care plans in order to assure access and quality. In recent weeks, IPRO has won competitive EQRO procurements in Louisiana, New Jersey and Puerto Rico. Other states for which IPRO continues to provide Medicaid managed care oversight include New York, Kentucky, Nebraska and Pennsylvania. "We're pleased that we're increasingly being recognized as not just a regional leader, but a national leader in EQRO activity," said Virginia Hill, IPRO's Vice President for Managed Care. For more information on EQRO activities, visit www.cms.gov.

IPRO Secures Special Role in Transitions Oversight

IPRO has been awarded a special subcontract to support the Colorado QIO in managing a national Medicare Care Transitions contract. Under the terms of the three-year Care Transitions National Coordinating Center contract awarded to the Colorado Foundation for Medical Care, that organization will support all QIOs nationwide in implementing programs aimed at improving care transitions and reducing re-hospitalizations. The Colorado Foundation chose IPRO as one of only three QIOs nationwide that will be responsible for managing technical support to sister QIOs. IPRO will coordinate support for QIOs in ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, OH, MI, WI, IL, IA and MN. Under the terms of the three-year national Medicare QIO workplan, the state-based organizations are required to develop care transitions initiatives in communities across each state. An additional QIO responsibility requires the organizations to support communities that wish to apply for special care transitions funding available through the Affordable Care Act. Recent studies have shown that as many as 20 percent of hospitalized Medicare beneficiaries are re-admitted to acute care institutions within 30 days of discharge.

Educator Evaluates New Resident Duty Rules

New, less-publicized changes to residency work rules are likely to have a larger impact on academic medicine than simple hours adjustments, according to a physician expert at the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. Writing in the College's *Health Policy Newsletter*, Associate Dean John W. Caruso, MD, FACP notes the new residence training program requirements issued by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education and effective July 2011. The new requirements limit intern duty periods to 16 total hours and resident duty periods to 24 hours, with the proviso that resident moonlighting activity be counted against the 80 hour per week total limit. While important, Caruso argues that other rules are more significant. These include requiring that residents use quality improvement methods to improve practices, participate in interdisciplinary teams to improve safety, and be guided by explicit performance measures. Other rules require a more structured approach to sign-outs and handovers as well as more explicit requirements addressing supervision. "In simple terms," Caruso writes, "it will no longer be acceptable for the least experienced team members to make critical decisions without the input of senior residents and faculty." Since 2001, IPRO has conducted external monitoring of resident duty hours on behalf of the New York State Department of Health. For a copy of the Jefferson Medical College Summer 2011 Newsletter (vol. 24, No. 3), visit the Medical College website at www.jefferson.edu/jmc/.

IPRO Senior Publication Wins Media Award

IPRO's *Healthy Seniors* Newsletter has won a Mature Media Merit Award in the Healthcare Division (Single Article-Magazine/Newspaper/Newsletter - Editorial category). Now in its 20th year, the National Mature Media Awards recognize the best marketing, communications, educational materials and programs for adults age 50 and older and is the largest awards program of its kind. Other 2011 winners include AARP, the Arthritis Foundation, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association and the National Institutes of Health. IPRO won for its Special Edition on Care Transitions. To read the IPRO newsletter, visit www.ipro.org.

Regional Business Group Creates Quality-Focused Center

The Northeast Business Group on Health (NEBGH), formerly the New York Business Group on Health, has announced creation of a Solutions and Innovations Center that will work on improving the quality and value of employee health care. Under the leadership of Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH, the Center will be guided by a Leadership Council and plans to create a Scientific Advisory Board to review research methodologies. In a July 26 announcement, NEBGH stated that its first priority will be working on preventable hospital readmissions, under a sponsorship arrangement involving Merck and Boehringer-Ingelheim. NEBGH states that the project will align with the public-private "Partnership for Patients" initiative. For more information on NEBGH initiative, visit the group's website at www.nebgh.org. For more on the Partnership, visit www.healthcare.gov.

IL Shows Decline in Infections

While there are nearly a quarter of a billion blood stream infections recorded each year in America's hospitals, the good news is the decline in one type of infection tracked by the *Illinois Hospital Report Care and Consumer Guide to Health Care* website. According to the website, the number of central line-associated bloodstream infections reported by adult intensive care units in Illinois declined to 282 cases in 2010, down from 383 infections reported in 2009. Operated by the Illinois Department of Public Health, the website includes hospital-specific information on satisfaction, volume and charges, surgical safety, nurse staffing and a host of performance indicators from the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Created and managed by IPRO eServices, the website's information is updated several times a year. Other performance measurement and reporting databases created and managed by IPRO eServices include the Bridges to Excellence Clinical Data Portal (<http://pao.ipro.org>), the Commonwealth Fund's Why Not the Best site (www.whynotthebest.org), and New York State's Profiles, which includes information on hospitals (www.hospitals.nyhealth.gov), and nursing homes (www.nursinghomes.nyhealth.gov), as well as home health agencies and hospice programs (www.homecare.nyhealth.gov).

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An electronic version of *Healthcare Quality Watch* is available; subscribe at <http://ipro.org/ipro-qw>.

We welcome your comments and suggestions.

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IPRO is a national organization providing a full spectrum of healthcare assessment and improvement services that foster more efficient use of resources and enhance healthcare quality to achieve better patient outcomes. For more than 25 years, IPRO has been highly regarded for the independence of its approach, the depth of its knowledge and experience, and the integrity of its programs. IPRO holds contracts with federal, state and local government agencies and corporate clients, in more than 33 states and the District of Columbia. A not-for-profit organization, IPRO is headquartered in Lake Success, NY.