



Health Care Quality Watch

MONTHLY NEWS BRIEFS FOR MANAGERS AND OPINION LEADERS

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Home health associations and home health agencies in New York have joined IPRO in launching the 2007 Home Health Quality Improvement National Campaign. The 12-month interdisciplinary campaign, which is sponsored by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, unites the home care community under a shared vision of reducing avoidable hospitalizations to improve the quality of patient care for Medicare beneficiaries. Local partners include the Continuing Care Leadership

Coalition, the Healthcare Association of New York State, the Home Care Association of New York State, Inc., and the New York State Association of Healthcare Providers. Together with IPRO, these organizations will serve as New York's Local Area Network for Excellence (LANE) for the campaign. "The home health community has come together with us to help ensure that care is provided in beneficiaries' homes when home care is the best option," said Clare B. Bradley, MD, MPH, Chief Medical

Officer, IPRO. "Our collaborative effort to reduce avoidable hospitalizations will equate with improved quality of care for many New Yorkers." The initial goal of the New York State LANE is to recruit at least half of the state's Medicare-certified home health agencies to participate in the campaign. Agencies that register to participate will have access to educational tools and resources, best-practice guidelines, success stories and other resources targeting reduction of avoidable acute care hospitalization. Each participating agency

This year, IPRO has joined a select group: the small number of organizations in New York State recognized with the Empire State Advantage Program's Silver Certification. The designation was given following a thorough review of IPRO's management systems, work processes, employee satisfaction levels and results for customers by Empire State Advantage, Inc. (ESA), a public/private partnership formed to help build economic competitiveness and improve the quality of life within New York State.

The ESA "Excellence at Work" program is the only training, mentoring and award program in New York State that is based on the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria. Participants compete against the standards defined in the ESA "Framework for Excellence" and not against other organizations. Silver Certification is awarded to organizations that have effective management systems

and work processes, are achieving good results, and have developed methods to significantly improve over time. These improvements are paying off, and many of the most important performance result areas, such as customer service, employee



effectiveness, operational efficiency, and financial results, are showing favorable trends.

"We understand that ESA's evaluation of IPRO was based on a stringent set of standards, and we are honored to receive this designation," said Theodore O. Will, Chief

Executive Officer, IPRO. We believe the award makes us a 'role model' for future winners to learn from and emulate. Moving forward, we anticipate that we will be able to mentor other organizations through the process."

In conferring the award, Empire State Advantage cited IPRO's growth and customer and employee satisfaction levels. "Our review team was very impressed by both the people and the operations at IPRO," said George Hansen, Executive Director, Empire State Advantage. "The goal of Empire State Advantage is to help New York State based organizations to achieve excellence so that they can increase their contributions to both the quality of life and the business competitiveness in their communities. And we're happy to see that IPRO is making a significant contribution toward reaching this goal." For more information on the Empire State Advantage program, visit www.empirestateadvantage.org.

will also receive reports on its performance, comparing it with national and state benchmarks. In addition, the LANE will conduct a series of teleconferences and learning sessions to provide guidance and support on implementation of the campaign strategies. Among the learning sessions will be programs in which home health agencies share their best practices and help others improve their care processes. Registration for the campaign is free and voluntary, as is participation in the educational sessions. More information about the campaign can be found on its official Web site, www.homehealthquality.org.

Long-term, acute-care hospitals (LTCHs) are invited to the second nationwide Webinar on the Program for Evaluating Payment Patterns Electronic Report (PEPPER), the electronic report of hospital-specific data for areas likely to result in Medicare payment errors. Compliance officers and utilization, health information management, and coding professionals are encouraged to attend. The educational seminar will be held on Tuesday, March 6, 2007, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Eastern time. This event is free, but space is limited — register today by visiting <http://www.hmpresources.org/> and clicking on “Events.” The Advanced session will build upon information covered during the Fundamentals session held in February 2007. (You do not need to have attended the Fundamentals session to attend the Advanced session; a recording of the Fundamentals session will be available at www.hmpresources.org for those who wish to review the earlier material prior to the Advanced session.) PEPPER provides summary statistics of administrative claims data on target areas (areas likely to have payment errors due to billing, DRG/coding and/or admission necessity issues) identified by

the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Hospitals can use PEPPER to review their data for the current quarters and the previous three fiscal years for each of these target areas while comparing their data to that of other hospitals.

Dianne Roux-Lirange PhD, MSRN has joined IPRO’s Health Care Quality Improvement team. Dr. Roux-Lirange, who holds a Masters degree in applied nursing research from McGill University and a PhD in Public Administration and Policy from the State University of New York at Albany, comes to IPRO from a position as a geriatric nurse in a neurology clinic, overseeing patient participation in clinical trials. She has also worked for multiple health plans, as well as the New York State Department of Health, and has contributed to quality improvement efforts affecting a variety of care settings. She will focus on implementing interventions relating to the Decreasing Anticholinergic Drugs in the Elderly (DADE) project. Anticholinergics should generally be avoided in the elderly because of potentially severe side effects and the availability of newer, safer alternatives. IPRO is partnering with 10 Medicare Part D plans statewide to assess prescribing patterns those medications. For more information about DADE, visit <http://providers.ipro.org/index/dade>.

The heart attack quality improvement measures that Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) like IPRO concentrate on show the most dramatic gains of all relevant core measures included in a new report from the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality (AHRQ). The QIO measures for managing heart attack improved at a rate of 15% in 1996, substantially better than

the improvement rate of 9.2% reported the prior year and more than five times better than the improvement rate experienced in core measures outside of the hospital setting. The rate of improvement on QIO measures addressing pneumonia care was 11.7% in 2006, while improvement for heart failure measures was 8.4%. Overall, AHRQ finds improvement in 26 of 40 “core” report measures for which there are two or more year’s worth of findings, deterioration in two measures and a lack of change for 12 measures. “Improvements in hospital care may have resulted from public reporting of health care quality measures, focused quality improvement programs, and policies that support improvement initiatives,” according to the authors. For a copy of AHRQ’s fourth annual *National Healthcare Quality Report*, visit the agency’s Web site at www.abrq.gov.

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We welcome your comments and suggestions. Please forward them to the Editor, Spencer Vibbert, at svibbert@ipro.org.

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