



Experts in Defining and Improving the Quality of Health Care

# Health Care Quality Watch

MONTHLY NEWS BRIEFS FOR MANAGERS AND OPINION LEADERS



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**IPRO is engaging in an aggressive 120-day, multi-media outreach campaign to New York's seniors this winter, with the goal of improving awareness of the right to lodge quality of care complaints.** Dubbed "Your Health. Your Voice."—IPRO's campaign aims to inform Medicare beneficiaries of the IPRO quality of care complaint helpline and their right to an impartial review of clinical care provided by hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies, hospices, outpatient facilities and at physicians' offices. The U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services is funding these intensive efforts in New York, Ohio, California and Florida, with the goal of targeting best practices for dissemination nationwide. IPRO's effort will include focus groups; a press event; teach-ins in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse Albany and New York City; newspaper articles; radio interviews and advertising; and a dedicated Web site. In addition, a critical part of the campaign will be devoted to reaching underserved populations. To schedule a presentation at a local community center, library or health care facility, contact IPRO Project Manager Linda Sion at 516-326-7767, ext. 544 or [lsion@ipro.org](mailto:lsion@ipro.org). Presentations are free of charge and available in English or Spanish.

**IPRO has been awarded full accreditation by the Washington DC-based URAC, formerly known as the Utilization Review Accreditation Commission, under that organization's independent review organization standards, version 3.0.** IPRO currently conducts independent reviews of managed care and fee for

service appeals on behalf of 17 states and the District of Columbia. "By applying for and receiving full accreditation under the independent review organization standards, IPRO has demonstrated a commitment to quality health care," said Alan P. Spielman, URAC president and CEO. "Quality health care is crucial to our nation's welfare and it is important to have organizations that are willing to measure themselves against national standards." To learn more about IPRO's independent review services on behalf of state governments, visit [www.ipro.org](http://www.ipro.org).

## IPRO Physician Membership Join Today.

Members of IPRO receive announcements and e-mails, newsletters on a variety of subjects, IPRO *eNews*, updates on cooperative studies, invitations to conferences, opportunities for collaborations and other useful information. Membership is free of charge and you can sign up online at [www.ipro.org/membership](http://www.ipro.org/membership). Please contact Claudette Steele at 516-209-5588 if you would prefer to sign up over the phone or if you need further assistance.

**Released this fall, The New York State Health Accountability Foundation's (NYSAF) first New York Regional Health Care Report Card is already winning high marks, having been chosen as an "Editor's Pick" by [www.consumerhealthratings.com](http://www.consumerhealthratings.com) which analyzes report cards nationwide.**

The report card provides data on the cost and quality of care received by members of commercial managed care plans in New York and New Jersey, and the quality of care, mortality rates, length of stay and pricing of care provided to hospital patients in both states. Available at [www.AboutHealthQuality.org](http://www.AboutHealthQuality.org), the report card is interactive and searchable by county, enabling consumers and businesses to create customized reports on their local hospitals and health plans. "We have continually sought to provide the most valid, useful information to health care consumers and businesses in the region since we launched our first New York HMO Report Card in 1999," says Theodore O. Will, Chief Executive Officer, IPRO. "By expanding the report card to include New Jersey health plans, we hope to provide an even broader picture of the quality and cost of health care delivery within the region." IPRO and the New York Business Group on Health are founding partners of the New York State Health Accountability Foundation. The Foundation is a private-public partnership dedicated to promoting transparency in the health care system and is directed by an Advisory Council representing major employers, including Michelle Scheiner, Director, Health & Welfare Benefits, CBS Corporation; Shelley J. Sinclair, Vice President, Benefits Planning, The Bank of New York; Louise HF Ionescu, Director, Employee Benefits, Human Resources, New York City Transit; and Lisa Polk, Director, Health Benefits Program, The City of New York.

**IPRO and its client, the New York State Department of Health, recently won the Webmasters' Guild "Best of Web" Award, for the Nursing Home Profile Web Site that IPRO created and operates for the State.** Issued by the New York State Forum of the Rockefeller Institute, the award recognizes one of three Profile sites that IPRO has created for the State (<http://nursinghomes.nyhealth.gov>). The other sites offer hospital and (shortly) home health agency comparative data. "New York's medical consumers and their families need reliable, user-friendly Web-based resources to help make nursing home choices," said Robert W. Barnett, Director of the DOH Patient Safety Center. "The Department of Health is proud to provide this resource and proud to receive this award." A division of the New York State Department of Health, the purpose of the Patient Safety Center is to maximize patient safety, reduce medical error, improve the quality of health care by improving systems of data reporting, collection, analysis and dissemination, and improve public access to health care information. "We are thrilled to receive this award," said Spencer Vibbert, Vice President, Communications and Corporate Development, IPRO. "We believe that the Patient Safety Center and IPRO have come up with a data-rich site that is easy for consumers to navigate, and are pleased to be acknowledged for our Web team's efforts."

According to the award citation, "Consumers and their constituents applauded the Web site because it is a tool to assist New Yorkers in making the best choice possible in finding nursing home care for elders. They also felt that the Web site, especially because of its user friendliness, would represent yet another step toward "consumer and patient empowerment." The Nursing Home Profile site enables the public to: easily search for nursing homes by name, region, county or selected

distance within a chosen zip code; identify nursing homes providing special services such as adult care, respite care or services to children in need of long-term care; compare nursing homes on the basis of up to 19 quality measures including the percent of residents whose need for help with daily activities has increased, the percent of residents given influenza vaccine during flu season and the percent of residents who were assessed and given pneumococcal vaccination; and obtain up-to-date information regarding nursing home inspection reports and complaint investigation history, as well as recent enforcement actions taken by DOH. Since launching in December 2006 the Nursing Home Profile site has seen, on average, more than 33,000 unique visitors a month.

**Medicare-funded Quality Improvement Organizations (QIO) should be directed to routinely monitor "consecutive stay sequences" at nursing homes, hospitals and other settings, according to a recent report from the Inspector General (IG) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.** The IG claims as many as 35% of sequences are associated with quality of care problems and fragmentation of care, The IG defines consecutive stay sequences as three or more stays in which admission dates for successive stays are within one day of each preceding stay. Medicare Part A inpatient payments totaled \$120 billion in 2004, with consecutive stays in all settings accounting for \$16.7 billion in Medicare payments. Consecutive stays with quality and/or fragmentation of care problems accounted for an estimated \$4.5 billion in 2004, according to the IG. The U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services concurred with the IG's findings and said it is examining plans to have QIOs focus more heavily on hospital readmissions and continuity of care in their new three-year workplans, which are scheduled to begin in August 2008.

**The American Health Quality Association, the trade association representing Quality Improvement Organizations across the nation, is supporting reform legislation introduced this fall by a senior member of the Senate Finance Committee, Orin Hatch, that would increase funding for outreach on beneficiary rights as well as make quality complaint findings more readily available to complainants and their families.** Other reforms included in the Hatch bill would make it easier for QIOs to share patient information with treating physicians; increase representation of non-physicians on QIO boards; expand QIO contracts from three years to five, with mandatory competition; and involve the Institute of Medicine in QIO workplan development. Additional bill sponsors include Senators Jay Rockefeller, Trent Lott and Edward Kennedy. For additional information about the bill, and another reform bill introduced by Senator Charles Grassley, contact AHQA at [www.ahqa.org](http://www.ahqa.org).

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We welcome your comments and suggestions. Please forward them to the Editor, Spencer Vibbert, at [svibbert@ipro.org](mailto:svibbert@ipro.org).

#### **IPRO**

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#### **JENY**

(IPRO's online community of practice)  
<http://jeny.ipro.org>

#### **New York State Healthcare Report Card**

[www.abouthealthquality.org/hcrc](http://www.abouthealthquality.org/hcrc)

#### **New York State Health Accountability Foundation**

[www.abouthealthquality.org](http://www.abouthealthquality.org)