

Healthcare Quality Watch

SEPTEMBER/
OCTOBER 2013

NEWS BRIEFS FOR
MANAGERS AND
OPINION LEADERS



Improving Healthcare
for the Common Good®

IPRO Creates Patient Engagement Center

IPRO's newly created Center for Patient & Family Engagement is now managing three separate programs aimed at teaching self-management skills to at-risk seniors with chronic diseases. Under the *Everyone with Diabetes Counts* campaign, IPRO has already enrolled more than 2,000 of a projected 6,000 Medicare beneficiaries in self-management classes, with a goal of graduating 2,500 Hispanic and Latino seniors by next July. The Center's Hypertension self-management program, in collaboration with 250 community-based and provider organizations, offers evidence-based education that will help Medicare beneficiaries control and manage their hypertension to prevent or delay further health complications. The goal of this project is to graduate 2,500 beneficiaries by next July. Finally, the Center's program for families and caregivers supporting seniors with Alzheimer's/Early Stage Dementia has a goal of graduating 1,000 caregivers by next July, utilizing 100 community based organizations and "train-the-trainer" workshops. For more information on our workshops, offered in both English and Spanish, please contact IPRO Project Lead Janice Hidalgo at (516) 326-7767, or email her at jhidalgo@ipro.us.

IPRO Supports Gerontology Training

IPRO is co-sponsoring an interdisciplinary educational program aimed at enhancing specialized training in geriatrics and geriatric mental health across the State of New York. With funding from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, the Consortium of New York Geriatric Education Centers is supporting a 40-hour certificate program for healthcare professionals as well as a 160-hour program to train faculty. Physicians participating in the certificate program receive CME credit through the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Online learning for nurses seeking continuing education credits is available through the New York University College of Nursing. Certification classes will take place from October 2013 to

June 2014 in downstate locations and upstate locations. Trainings use an evidence-based curriculum that emphasizes geriatrics in multiple settings, including nursing homes, chronic and acute disease hospitals, ambulatory care centers and senior centers. To learn more about the programs, visit the Consortium's website at www.nygec.org.

West Coast Affiliate Offers Physician Consulting

IPRO's San Francisco-based affiliate Lumetra Healthcare Solutions is now offering physicians a range of customized programs to help them utilize electronic health records (EHRs) in a way that meets government requirements while potentially qualifying them for incentive payments. Lumetra's new product line builds on the success the organization has achieved in supporting physicians via Health Information Technology Support Services (HITSS). Lumetra offers California-based clients three different packages and several add-on services. The most basic plan, HITSS Silver, aids providers who are pursuing "Meaningful Use"—the benchmark designation the federal government requires in order to fund implementation of EHRs. Attaining Meaningful Use means using the EHR in a way that improves the quality of healthcare for patients, involves them and their families in health decisions, and maintains the confidentiality of personal health information. Lumetra's Silver plan offers help desk assistance to providers needing evaluation and assessment of their Meaningful Use measures, troubleshooting with EHR vendors, facilitating provider registration with CMS, and ensuring successful attestation of Meaningful Use in order to receive incentive payments from CMS. The Gold and Platinum plans include these features, and offer more advanced assistance toward optimizing the EHR. For more on the Lumetra product offerings, please contact Kimbelee Snyder, Vice President, Informatics Services, Lumetra Healthcare Solutions, One Sansome Street, Suite 950, San Francisco, CA 94104, (415) 677-2000 or via info@lumetrasolutions.com.

IPRO Achieves Review Accreditation

IPRO has again achieved full accreditation as an external Independent Review Organization (IRO) by the Washington DC-based Utilization Review Accreditation Commission (URAC). IROs provide objective clinical reviews of coverage disputes between patients and insurers on behalf of state governments as well as self-insured plans and health plan administrators. IPRO currently performs these independent review services on behalf of 20 states and multiple self-insured plans and health plan administrators. Among the standards that URAC-accredited IROs must meet is access to all major physician specialties and subspecialties as well as the ability to meet tight review timeframes. URAC's accreditation is for three years.

IPRO Honors Record Number of Award Winners

Eighteen individual New York healthcare providers—and three groups of healthcare organizations, totaling an additional 60 awardees—are recipients of IPRO Quality Awards for 2013. The awards, given annually by IPRO, recognize organizations and professionals who demonstrate a commitment to improving the quality of care provided to New York's Medicare beneficiaries. IPRO is the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) for New York State, and manages the state's End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Network for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The awards were given during IPRO's 29th Annual Meeting, June 4th at the LaGuardia Marriott Hotel. "While these awardees represent virtually every facet and region of New York State's healthcare community, what unites them is their commitment to quality improvement," says Clare B. Bradley MD, MPH, Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer, IPRO. "We applaud their achievements." In addition to the awards ceremony, the Annual Meeting featured remarks by two individuals who are playing key roles in transforming the nation's and the state's healthcare system. Jean D. Moody-Williams, RN, MPP, Director, Quality Improvement Group, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Office of Clinical Standards and Quality, delivered the keynote address. The meeting's featured speaker was Danielle Holahan, Deputy Director, New York State Health Benefit Exchange. For more on award winners, visit the IPRO website at www.ipro.org.

Feds Seek Comment on Physician Payment Data

In light of recent court rulings and developments in Congress, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) is asking for public comment on the extent to which the government ought to broaden public access to information on the payments individual physicians receive for treating Medicare patients. Last May a federal court judge in Florida lifted an injunction dating back to 1979 that had blocked publication of Medicare billing data that would identify individual physicians by name. The ban had long been justified as protecting the privacy rights of physicians. The effort to overturn the ban was led by the parent company of the *Wall Street Journal*, a consulting outfit called Real Time Medical Data and HHS itself—all three parties argued that continuing injunctive relief was too broad in an era of increasing information transparency. Additionally, HHS notes that the Affordable Care Act includes a provision enabling disclosure of physician-identifying payment information to qualified entities intent on producing public performance reports. No parties came forward to appeal the Florida judge's decision and so HHS is now asking for guidance on how broadly to interpret the lifting of the ban. HHS is underscoring that it has no intention of permitting the release of

information that would identify individual Medicare beneficiaries by name. Individuals wishing to comment on the issue have until early September 2013 to respond to HHS. For more information on the issue, visit <http://downloads.cms.gov/files/Request-for-Public-Comment-re-Physician-Data-8-6-2013.pdf>.

IPRO Manager Named Association President

IPRO Senior Director Renato L. Estrella, MSHA, RHIA FAHIMA, has been elected President/Chair-Elect of the New York Health Information Management Association for the Association's 2013–2014 term. This is Estrella's second term as head of NYHIMA's Board—he served as President during 2008–2009. In her July 23 announcement, Executive Director Christine Harrington noted Estrella's "demonstrated commitment to our members and the health information management profession..."

Online Series Examines QIO Efforts

New York Times Journalist/Blogger Judith Graham has written a two-part online series examining efforts by QIOs to protect Medicare beneficiaries. The series focuses on premature hospital discharges, as well as "immediate advocacy" support services in which QIOs help patients solve problems that fall short of requiring medical record reviews. It includes interviews with QIO leaders in Iowa, Illinois, Georgia and New York. To access the articles, "A Check on Premature Hospital Discharges," published August 20, 2013 and "Faster Assistance for Medicare Patients," published August 23, 2013, visit <http://newoldage.blogs.nytimes.com>.

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Healthcare Quality Watch is published by the Communications Department at IPRO.

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

We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Please forward them to the Editor, Spencer Vibbert, at svibbert@ipro.org.

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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.