

# Healthcare Quality Watch

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NEWS BRIEFS FOR  
MANAGERS AND  
OPINION LEADERS



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## Trade Group Hails Latest QIO Impact Data

The Washington DC-based American Health Quality Association (AHQA) is hailing new findings from the federal government demonstrating that Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs)—working in close partnership with providers, federal, state and private partners, and others in local communities—have prevented more than 95,000 hospitalizations and 27,000 hospital readmissions among Medicare beneficiaries. From October 2010 to March 2013, data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) indicate that hospital readmissions among Medicare beneficiaries declined by 13.22 percent in QIO communities, compared to a “secular trend” reduction of 12.55 percent. Similarly, hospital admissions declined further in QIO communities—8.39 percent vs. 8.12 percent nationally—pointing to the efforts of QIOs as an important lever in improving healthcare quality nationwide. By improving care transitions (when patients move from one care setting to another, such as from a hospital to their home), AHQA notes that reduced hospitalizations, including in QIO communities, resulted in a cost savings of nearly \$1 billion. While progress has been made nationally to improve care transitions and reduce the number of patients who return to the hospital within 30 days, CMS’s findings indicate that readmissions have been reduced further in communities where QIOs play an active role. “QIOs work in close partnership with physicians, nurses and other members of the interdisciplinary team across settings, forming a network that helps patients remain healthy long after they leave the hospital,” said Adrienne Mims, MD, Vice President, Chief Medical Officer of Atlanta-based Alliant GMCF, the QIO for Georgia, and president of AHQA. “Because QIOs are part of the local community, we’re able to constantly innovate and adapt, ensuring our efforts meet the unique needs of local seniors and their families. Successfully reducing readmissions takes the

entire community.” Keeping seniors out of the hospital is just one of the QIOs’ measurable improvements in the quality of care provided to the nation’s nearly 50 million Medicare beneficiaries. In intensive care units and other hospital units in more than 800 facilities nationwide, QIOs provide assistance to help reduce healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). From February 2011 to August 2013, QIOs’ efforts resulted in a 53 percent relative improvement rate in reduced central line-associated blood stream infections. For more information on QIO impact, visit the AHQA website at [www.ahqa.org](http://www.ahqa.org).

## Feds Restructure Medicare QIO Activities

CMS has restructured the QIO Program from its previous 53 contracts, in which each QIO performed both case review and quality improvement support for each state or territory. Now, there is a regional structure for case review and an industry-determined service structure for quality improvement initiatives. In the new structure, case review and quality improvement functions are performed by different contractors; the contract periods are extended from 3 to 5 years; and there is enhanced focus on learning, collaboration, and the dissemination of best practices. Now, one group of QIOs will handle complaints while another group will provide technical assistance to support providers and suppliers. *The Beneficiary and Family Centered Care Quality Improvement Organizations (BFCC-QIOs)* manage all beneficiary complaints and quality of care reviews to ensure consistency in the review process while taking into consideration local factors important to beneficiaries and their families. *Quality Innovation Network (QIN) QIOs* will be responsible for working with providers and the community on multiple, data-driven quality initiatives to improve patient safety, reduce harm, and improve clinical care at their local and regional levels. On August 1, 2014, all current and future beneficiary quality review casework and appeals in New York

will be conducted by Livanta LLC of Annapolis Junction, MD. CMS will shortly award the regional QIN-QIO contracts. A list of the current BFCC-QIOs and QIN-QIOs for each area, and their contact information, are located at QIOProgram.org. More information on the QIO Program can be found at QIOProgram.org or by contacting 1-800-MEDICARE.

### Medicare Agency Announces New QIO Program Website

To expand awareness of the progressive healthcare quality improvement work being conducted by Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs), CMS

announced that the QIO Program has launched a new website—QIOProgram.org. The new site highlights the QIO Program’s priorities and patient-centered approach to improving care. It also provides useful resources such as videos, industry headlines and issues of the Program’s e-newsletter, *QIO News*. The QIO Program is committed to increasing patient and family engagement, creating healthy living communities and building value while reducing healthcare costs. QIOProgram.org offers up-to-date healthcare quality information. The site is located at QIOProgram.org.

### IPRO Announces Quality Award Winners

Eight individual New York healthcare providers and groups of providers—including all 11 hospitals of New York City’s Health and Hospitals Corporation and one group of 28 Capital District healthcare—have been named recipients of the 2014 IPRO Quality Awards. The awards, given annually by IPRO, recognize organizations and professionals that demonstrate a commitment to improving the quality of care provided to New York’s Medicare beneficiaries. The

awards were given during IPRO’s 30th Annual Meeting, June 3rd at the LaGuardia Marriott Hotel. “These awardees represent a broad swath of New York State’s healthcare community, a group dedicated to the hard work of quality improvement,” says Clare B. Bradley MD, MPH, Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer, IPRO. “New York’s Medicare beneficiaries are better off due to their efforts.” Awards were given for accomplishments on a range of quality-related projects:

Organization	NYS Location	Project
Bellhaven Center for Rehabilitation & Nursing Care	Brookhaven	Eliminating Healthcare-Acquired Conditions in Nursing Homes (Pressure Ulcer Reduction)
Jewish Health and Rehabilitation Center at Menorah Park	Syracuse	Eliminating Healthcare-Acquired Conditions in Nursing Homes (Reduction in Use of Physical Restraints)
Throgs Neck Extended Care Facility	Bronx	Eliminating Healthcare-Acquired Conditions in Nursing Homes (Pressure Ulcer Reduction)
Van Rensselaer Manor Nursing Facility	Troy	Eliminating Healthcare-Acquired Conditions in Nursing Homes (Reduction in Use of Physical Restraints)
New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, Office of Patient Centered Care	New York City	Preventing Healthcare-Associated Infections in Hospitals
Bassett Medical Center	Cooperstown	Preventing Oral Anticoagulant Adverse Events
DeGraff Memorial Hospital/Geriatric Center of Western New York, Kaleida Health	North Tonawanda	Preventing Oral Anticoagulant Adverse Events
St. Mary’s/Seton Health/St. Peter’s Health Partners	Troy	Preventing Oral Anticoagulant Adverse Events
<b>Group Award</b>		
28 Organizations* (“Albany Care Transitions Coalition”)	Capital District	Integrating Care for Populations and Communities—Care Transitions

\*For complete list of honorees, please go to <http://ipro.org/about/ipro-quality-awards>

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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).

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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 30 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.