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## Healthcare Quality Watch

July/August 2019

### IPRO Director Co-Authors Important Sepsis Article

While hospital performance on sepsis protocol completion rates has improved since New York embarked on a landmark statewide quality improvement initiative in 2013, gains were less dramatic for black patients than they were for white patients. That's the conclusion of an article "Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Care Following The New York State Sepsis Initiative" in the July 2019 edition of *Health Affairs*—co-authored by researchers at Brown University Medical School, Ohio State University, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and IPRO's Senior Director Kathleen Terry, PhD. The authors report that black patients are represented disproportionately in lower-performing hospitals. It has been suggested that these hospitals have fewer resources and less quality improvement infrastructure than other hospitals. The study didn't find disparities in optimal sepsis management between blacks and whites treated in the same institutions. "Our work highlights the need for state and federal policy makers to anticipate and monitor the effects that quality improvement projects, such as the New York State Sepsis Initiative, have on racial and ethnic minority groups," says first author Keith Corl, an Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Pulmonary, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine Division at Warren Alpert Medical School. "Racial and ethnic minority groups can get left behind. Knowing this, it is our job to better design and monitor these programs to ensure racial and ethnic minority patients realize the same benefits as white patients." For more information, visit [www.healthaffairs.org](http://www.healthaffairs.org).

### IPRO VP Selected for National Panel

IPRO Vice President Virginia Hill has been chosen to participate on a national advisory panel charged with advising the federal government on a new Medicaid and



CHIP managed care quality rating system. The panel, to be convened by the Mathematica consulting firm, will support the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in implementing a key provision of a 2018 federal rule mandating a rating system to help beneficiaries and families choose health plans. Panel members include representatives of state Medicaid and CHIP agencies, health plans, providers and experts in quality measurement. For more information, visit <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/11/14/2018-24626/medicaid-program-medicare-and-childrens-health-insurance-plan-chip-managed-care>.

### HHS: Fight Against Opioid Addiction "Moving in the Right Direction"

On July 10, *Kaiser Health News* reported the fight against opioid addiction seems to be moving in the right direction and the threat of new addictions appeared to slow, according to the Office of Inspector General in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Prescriptions for two drugs used to treat opioid addiction increased significantly from 2016 to 2018. HHS said about 174,000 beneficiaries received this medication to help them with recovery during 2018. In the two years studied, prescriptions for an opioid through Medicare Part D decreased by 11%. Beneficiaries considered at serious risk for misuse or overdose—either because they received extreme amounts of opioids or appeared to be

“doctor shopping”—dropped 46%. The report from HHS also said there were 51% fewer doctors or other providers flagged for prescribing opioids to patients at serious risk from 2016 through 2018. “For now, the numbers are going in the right direction,” said Miriam Anderson, lead investigator on the report. “But this is a national crisis and we must remain vigilant and continue to fight this epidemic and ensure that opioids are prescribed and used appropriately.” Read more: <https://khn.org/news/medicare-going-in-right-direction-on-opioid-epidemic>.

## Nominations Due for Federal Quality Summit Panel

Experts have until July 31 to submit nominations to participate in a national Quality Summit to be convened by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services to advise on ways to enhance healthcare quality in the U.S. Co-chaired by HHS Secretary Eric Hargan and nationally recognized quality expert Peter Pronovost, MD, PhD, the Summit is intended as a forum for HHS’s formulation of a Health Quality Roadmap. Panelists will include 15 non-government experts charged with advising on modernization of HHS’s quality program in ways that increase competition, quality and access. The announcement states that CMS, AHRQ, CDC, HRSA and the Indian Health Service “have not undergone a systematic objective review” to ensure that programs adhere to stated goals and objectives. For more information, visit <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2019/07/09/hhs-quality-summit-fact-sheet.html>.

## Hospitals Boost Support for Antibiotic Stewardship but Challenges Remain

On July 17, *MedPage Today* reported that hospital support for antibiotic stewardship programs has increased since 2013, but surveillance for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) has declined, according to a study published in *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology*. Researchers said nearly all the health care facilities, which were mostly acute care hospitals, had antibiotic stewardship programs, up from 83% in 2013 to 95% in 2017. In terms of antibiotic stewardship programs, 78% of facilities provided financial support for physician

medical directors versus 52% in 2013. However, while MRSA was still the most common multi-drug organism where surveillance was reported, surveillance dropped from 90% of surveyed facilities in 2013 to 69% of surveyed facilities in 2018. “This finding may reflect a response to surveillance recommendations made in the 2015 [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] CRE toolkit, coupled with data demonstrating no significant reduction in MRSA transmission with active surveillance and use of contact precautions,” researchers said in their report. Hospitals reported challenges for monitoring, including lack of funding and staff as well as “insufficient information technology and/or data analyst support.” Read more: <https://www.medpagetoday.com/infectiousdisease/infectioncontrol/81066>.

## President Seeks Increase in Home Dialysis, Kidney Transplants

President Trump has signed a directive aimed at dramatically increasing at-home dialysis and kidney transplants in the U.S. The Executive Order issued July 10 notes that 37 million individuals have chronic kidney disease, with more than 100,000 beginning dialysis each year. The order includes an awareness initiative, a test of multiple alternative payment models to encourage home dialysis and transplants, an increase in research on development of an artificial kidney, and a review of rules and procedures surrounding organ procurement. The order says that within 30 days HHS should propose a regulation removing financial barriers to living organ donation. For more information, visit [www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-advancing-american-kidney-health](http://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-advancing-american-kidney-health).

IPRO is a non-profit organization that works with government agencies, providers and consumers to implement innovative programs that bring policy ideas to life. For over 30 years we’ve made creative use of clinical expertise, emerging technology and data solutions to make the healthcare system work better.



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