

Quality Improvement Organizations: Partners in Improvement

Todd Ketch

Vice President of Government Affairs
The American Health Quality Association

2003 NASDDDS Annual Meeting

Alexandria, VA

November 14, 2003

QIOs: A National Network of Quality Improvement Organizations

- Private organizations dedicated to health care quality improvement – 40 organizations hold 53 contracts with Medicare
- “PRO program” created by Congress in 1982
- 1984-92: primarily case review to control PPS utilization, react to poor quality
- 1993-present: primarily facilitating collaborative quality improvement in clinical systems
- “PROs” were renamed “QIOs” in 2001

Primary QIO Function: Expedite Clinical Quality Improvement

- QIOs are charged with measurably improving care for Medicare beneficiaries
- Responsible for improvement statewide (inpatient, outpatient, NH) and with intensive groups (NH, HH, outpatient)
- QIO quality improvement projects are voluntary

Care Settings for QIO Quality Improvement Work Nationwide

Hospitals: AMI, CHF, Pneumonia treatment and prevention, Surgical infection prevention

Physician Offices: Promote mammography, diabetes care, flu and pneumonia prevention.

Nursing Homes: Focus on three quality measures (mostly pain and pressure ulcers) and assist public in understanding 10 publicly reported “Quality Measures” (based on MDS data).

Home Health Agencies: Teach improvement and assist public with 11 publicly reported “Quality Measures” (based on OASIS data).

QIO Work 1999-2002: Hospital and Physician Offices

Inpatient

- Heart Attack
- Heart Failure
- Stroke
- Immunization screening
- Pneumonia

Average national improvement: 19.9%

Outpatient

- Flu and Pneumonia vaccination
- Diabetes
- Mammography

Average National improvement: 11.9%

Non-Medicare Work of QIOs

- 70% of QIOs also serve Medicaid:
 - Focused Quality Review (e.g., pediatric immunization rates, preventive care, asthma).
 - External Quality Review of MCOs.
 - Administration of CAHPS surveys.
- 30% of QIOs have private customers:
 - Data management/analysis, record abstraction.
 - HEDIS audits.
 - Independent medical review of insurance claims.
- 20% have other Federal contracts: VA, IHS, and TRICARE.

QIOs and Patient Safety

- QIOs recognize that quality problems can rarely be attributed to a lack of will, skill, or benign intention among the people involved with care
- Most errors are caused by a system failure
- Failure to follow a “best practice” is a type of error
- QIOs focus on improving systems rather than addressing isolated events

QIO Evolution

- QA to QI
- Transformation from facility based to community based improvement
- Patient Centered -- improving care across health care settings
- Focus on improving systems

Moving from QA to QI

- Early activities focused on QA model – enforcing minimum standards through case review and sanctions
- Caused adversarial relationship between PROs and providers – didn't do much to improve quality
- Early '90s transformation to voluntary collaborative quality improvement
- QI is a pursuit of excellence – providing the best care possible

QIO Interventions/Support

- **Educational materials:** guidelines, summaries of best practices
- **Model interventions:** standing orders, clinical pathway/map of care, discharge protocols and checklists
- **Customized data collection tools:** paper or electronic, self-collection, self or QIO analysis
- **Staff support:** do/teach chart abstraction, install intervention, answer questions on site or by phone.
- **Feedback:** on site, by phone, email

QIO Expertise: Changing Systems of Care

QIOs work with providers to help patients/consumers meet desired outcomes by:

- Collecting and analyzing data
- Assessing systems and processes
- Identifying gaps
- Assisting with development, implementation and evaluation of improvement plans
- Acting as convener and facilitator
- Using and teach quality improvement methods – methods that can be applied to services and systems beyond clinical health care

Learn more about the QIOs

- Go to the AHQA website at www.ahqa.org
- Contact a QIO directly using the “QIO Locator” on the website.
- Contact me at tketch@ahqa.org.