

## **NQF Board Gives Green Light to Home Health Quality Reporting Measures**

In its latest step in developing home health quality measures, the National Quality Forum's (NQF) board of directors voted to endorse the organization's recommended set of measures. NQF, a nonprofit corporation created "to develop and implement a national strategy for health care quality measurement and reporting," began work last year on its "Home Health Performance Measures" some of which are to be used for public reporting, under a contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

According to NQF, a major purpose behind the quality measures is to provide information to facilitate consumers' selection of home health care providers.

### **Selected quality measures will be used by:**

- Discharge planners and physicians, for placement of patients;
- Home health care providers, for internal quality improvement; and
- Policymakers, to oversee quality improvement efforts.

In the next, and final, step in developing the home health performance measures, NQF will review reconsideration requests submitted by the public. The recommendations as they stand may be appealed by notifying NQF in writing no later than March 9, 2005 (send correspondence to 601 13th Street, NW, Suite 500 North, Washington, DC 20005, or fax to (202) 783-3434).

NQF advises that for an appeal to be considered, the notification letter must include information clearly demonstrating that the submitter has interests that are directly and materially affected by the NQF-endorsed recommendations. The letter must illustrate how the NQF recommendation has had (or will have) an adverse effect on those interests. Once this process is completed and any adjustments are made to the set of recommended measures, NQF will report the quality measures to CMS.

The NQF board of directors was presented and gave its approval to 15 home health performance measures. All of the endorsed performance measures are related to OASIS. According to comments on the measures from NQF President and CEO Kenneth Kizer, "this set of consensus standards will provide consumers with a guide for gauging the quality of home health care services."

**The board-approved measures are:**

- Improvement in ambulation/locomotion;
- Improvement in bathing;
- Improvement in transferring;
- Improvement in management of oral medications;
- Improvement in pain interfering with activity;
- Improvement in status of surgical wounds;
- Improvement in dyspnea;
- Improvement in urinary incontinence;
- Increase in number of pressure ulcers;
- Emergent care for wound infections, deteriorating wound status;
- Emergent care for improper medication administration, medication side effects;
- Emergent care for hypo/hyperglycemia;
- Acute care hospitalization;
- Discharge to community; and
- Emergent care.

**Measures Needing Further Consideration**

Also, six measures -- substantial decline in management of oral medications; discharge to community while still needing wound care or medication assistance; unexpected nursing home admission; family evaluation of hospice care; comfort within 48 hours; and unwanted hospitalizations -- remain under consideration and will be adjudicated in an additional round of voting.

**The NQF board also approved eight research recommendations, including identification of additional:**

- Measures that address all home health care populations;
- Cross-cutting measures;
- Measures that address all home health care provider organizations;
- Measures that address all of the NQF aims;
- Measures in all framework areas;
- Measures that address high-risk, high-volume, high-cost conditions and treatments;
- Care management and system-level coordination measures; and
- Measures where gaps in consensus exist.

**Finally, the NQF board approved nine additional recommendations relating to implementation of performance-measure processes, which will require NQF to address (or readdress):**

- Primary purpose of the measures;
- Data and burden reduction;
- Information system readiness;
- Sufficiency of measures against evaluation criteria;
- Equitable home health care quality;
- Implementation;
- Reporting home health care performance;
- Scope of the consensus standards; and
- Improving the set.

Once CMS receives the final NQF report, which is expected to be completed in March or April, the publicly reported outcome measures currently available on CMS's ["Home Health Compare" website](#) will be updated with those recommended.