Tools for Hospitals and Health Care Systems

The mission of AHRQ is to improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care by:

- Using evidence to improve health care.
- Improving health care outcomes through research.
- Transforming research into practice.

Introduction

Translating research into practice that enhances quality of care in the Nation's hospitals continues to be a major effort of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the lead Federal agency for research on health care quality, costs, outcomes, and patient safety. AHRQ and its predecessor agencies have maintained a longstanding commitment to developing tools to help hospitals examine performance, enhance treatment effectiveness, and improve the health care system to help reduce error and improve patient safety. Briefly described here are some of the tools recently developed for hospitals and other provider organizations from AHRQ research.

Examining Performance

***QualityTools* Web site provides practical, ready-to-use tools for measuring and improving health care quality.** This online clearinghouse allows users to search for tools that target a disease/condition, audience, tool category, or vulnerable population. The *QualityTools* providers' page provides links to resources (including Web sites, benchmarks, guidelines, data, and measures) to help hospitals and other provider organizations assess and improve care delivery. Subscription to a weekly "What's New" service is available. *QualityTools* is also home to AHRQ's National Healthcare Quality Report and National Healthcare Disparities Report. *QualityTools* can be accessed at:

www.qualitytools.ahrq.gov/

AHRQ Quality Indicators (QIs) can help hospitals assess their safety and quality of care using routinely collected administrative data. Of particular interest to hospital quality assessment, AHRQ's Inpatient Quality Indicators and Patient Safety Indicators include measures of inpatient mortality, utilization, and volume for selected conditions and procedures as well as hospital- and area-level indicators for complications that may indicate in-hospital patient safety events. The QI

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software can be used to help hospitals identify quality concerns or potential problem areas that might need further investigation. (A third QI module—the Prevention Quality Indicators—can be used with hospital administrative data to identify levels of potentially preventable admissions for a variety of conditions in order to target interventions at the State, community, or even ZIP Code level.) More information on the AHRQ QIs (including downloading instructions) is available at: www.qualityindictors. ahrq.gov/; users may sign up for the QI Listserv® at: www.qualityindicators. ahrq.gov/signup.htm

Online query system allows hospitals to compare their performance with other States and the Nation. Web-based *HCUPnet* uses data from the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project, a Federal-State-Industry partnership between AHRQ and public and private data organizations in over 35 participating States. An easy-to-use online query system, its interactive format gives hospitals access to national and regional statistics on numbers of procedures, diagnoses, length of stay, costs, and charges. It also allows hospitals to compare their performance to national benchmarks using AHRQ's Prevention QIs and Patient Safety Indicators. *HCUPnet* is available at: http://hcup.ahrq.gov/HCUPnet.asp

New patient survey tool will enable hospitals to uniformly measure and publicly report patients' perspectives on their care. Jointly developed by AHRQ and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the CAHPS® Hospital Survey (HCAHPS®) will help address the need for a national standard for collecting information on patient experience with hospital care and making valid comparisons across all hospitals. Hospitals will voluntarily begin using HCAHPS® in 2005 under

the auspices of the Hospital Quality Alliance; the first full national implementation of HCAHPS® is planned later in 2005. More information on HCAHPS® is available at: www.ahrq.gov/qual/cahps/ hcahpfact.htm; users may sign up for the HCAHPS®Listserv® at: www.ahrq.gov/qual/cahps/hcahplist.htm

Assessing Emergency Preparedness

Hospitals can use new bioterrorism readiness questionnaire to assess their preparedness for responding to a bioterrorist attack. Developed and pilot tested in four hospitals under an AHRQ contract, the Bioterrorism Emergency Planning and Preparedness Questionnaire for Healthcare Facilities is designed to help hospitals assess the capability of their personnel and systems to respond to a bioterrorism incident. The 42-question survey can be downloaded from the AHRQ Web site at: www.ahrq.gov/about/cpcr/ bioterrtxt.htm

New computer staffing model can help hospitals and health systems plan antibiotic dispensing and vaccination campaigns. Developed with AHRQ support, the Bioterrorism and Epidemic Outbreak Response Model is an interactive planning tool designed to estimate the number of staff needed to operate a mass prophylaxis center given specific population size, time frame, patient flow, and staff limitations. This model was provided to the American Hospital Association (AHA) for distribution to U.S. hospitals. The Microsoft® Excel workbook may be accessed from the AHA Disaster Readiness Web site at: www.hospitalconnect.com/aha/ key_issues/disaster_readiness/resources/ vaccination.html

New AHRQ tool provides module-based approach to evaluate hospital disaster drills. Separate modules enable hospitals to assess the readiness of their command, decontamination, triage, and treatment zones. Among the aspects addressed are time points, zone descriptions and operations, personnel, communications, information flow, security, victim flow and tracking, personal protective equipment and safety, supplies, rotation of staff, and zone disruption. Modules for pre-drill assessment and debriefing and detailed user instructions are included. *Evaluation of Hospital Disaster Drills: A Module-Based Approach* is available at: www.ahrq.gov/research/hospdrills/hospdrill.htm

Selection matrix tool can help hospitals locate and rank alternate sites in the event of a public health emergency. After a bioterrorist event or other public health emergency, hospitals may be overwhelmed by a sudden influx of patients. The Alternative Care Site Selection Matrix Tool is designed to allow regional planners to locate and rank potential alternate sites—stadiums, schools, recreation centers, motels, and other venues—based on whether they have adequate ventilation, plumbing, food supply and kitchen facilities, and other factors. The tool, developed under AHRQ contract as part of the *Rocky Mountain Regional Care Model for Bioterrorist Events*, is available at: www.ahrq.gov/research/altsites/alttool1.htm

For other bioterrorism planning and response tools from AHRQ, see: www.ahrq.gov/browse/bioterbr.htm

Improving Organization

New AHRQ tool helps hospitals and health care systems assess and improve an organization's culture of patient safety. This survey tool can be used to assess the safety culture of a hospital as a whole, or for specific units within hospitals, as well as to track changes in patient safety culture over time and evaluate the impact of patient safety interventions. The survey can be customized to reflect the needs of individual hospitals. The *Hospital Survey on Patient Safety Culture,* which includes the survey tool and a detailed user's guide, can be found at: www.ahrq.gov/qual/hospculture/

National Quality Measures Clearinghouse™ (NQMC) assists hospitals to select, use, and apply clinically proven quality measures. Designed as a one-stop, Web-based shop for hospitals, health systems, health plans, and others who may be interested in quality measurement and improvement, the NQMC has the most current evidence-based quality measures and measure sets available to evaluate health care quality. Users can search the NQMC for measures that target a particular disease or condition, treatment, age range, gender, vulnerable population, setting of care, or contributing organization. Visitors also can compare attributes of two or more quality measures side by side to determine which measures best suit their needs. The NQMC can be accessed without charge at: www.qualitymeasures.ahrq.gov/

Enhancing Care

Web-based clinical pharmacology educational tool can help hospitals prevent adverse events. This online educational module, Preventable Adverse Drug Reactions: A Focus on Drug Interactions, was developed by investigators at one of AHRQ's Centers for Education and Research on Therapeutics in collaboration with the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. The module consists of a set of slides illustrating a sample case, extensive literature references, and self-assessment questions. The module is free and publicly available at: www.fda.gov/cder/drug/drugReactions/default.htm

National Guideline Clearinghouse™ (NGC) lets hospital staff locate and compare clinical recommendations online. The NGC is a Web-based resource that contains guidelines submitted by health care organizations, associations, medical societies, and Federal agencies. Updated weekly with new content, the site provides an accessible and comprehensive source of clinical practice guidelines—in both summary and full text (where available) format—saving users hours of researching to find similar information. Free subscription to weekly "What's New" electronic notices is available. Originally developed by AHRQ in partnership with the American Medical Association and the American Association of Health Plans, the NCG can be accessed without charge at: www.guideline.gov/

For More Information

More information on AHRQ and its programs and projects may be found on the AHRQ Web site at: www.ahrq.gov/

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