CORNERSTONE IN FOCUS: Expanded Hospital Compare Web Site Provides Access to Medicare Information on Quality, Price

New survey information available on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) Hospital Compare Web site offers consumers more insight about the hospitals in their communities. The enhancements give consumers access to quality, patient satisfaction, and pricing information to make more informed decisions about the quality and value of the health care available to them through local hospitals.

HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt announced the newly-updated Web site and praised the enhanced resource, noting "Medicare is strengthening its commitment to use the transparency of quality information to help give consumers more choice about the quality of their health care and how they may be able to lower their health care costs."

The Hospital Compare Web site currently provides information on 26 quality measures, which include process of care and outcome measures. The 10 new patient experience measures add to the existing information that gives consumers a picture of the quality of care delivered at their local hospitals. Read more online about the enhancements or visit the Hospital Compare Web site.

Medicare Trustees Again Sound the Alarm on Program's Fiscal Health

The Medicare Trustees announced last week that expenditures for the government health care program are still growing faster than the rest of the economy.

In releasing their report, Trustees noted that, "These projections demonstrate the need for timely and effective action to address Medicare's financial challenges. Consideration of such reforms should occur in the relatively near future. The sooner the solutions are enacted, the more flexible and gradual they can be."

President Bush submitted legislation in February that would modernize and transform Medicare, as required following the 2007 funding warning. The legislation would reduce Medicare spending through the application of value-based principles and give HHS the authority to use and release Medicare claims data for quality improvement, performance measurement, public reporting, and treatment purposes. Learn more online about the report or proposed legislation.

Profile of a CVE: the Minnesota Healthcare Value Exchange

Last month, Secretary Leavitt traveled to St. Paul, Minn. to designate the Minnesota Healthcare Value Exchange as one of 14 federally recognized Chartered Value Exchanges (CVE).

Secretary Leavitt, (*right, pictured with Jennifer Lunblad*) praised the multi-stakeholder collaboration for advancing health care quality for consumers.

The Minnesota Healthcare Value Exchange is dedicated to improving care and supporting the quality initiatives of providers, reducing reporting-related expenses for medical groups and health plans, and communicating its findings in a usable way to consumers. It is a partnership of four organizations: Minnesota Community Measurement (MNCM), the Buyers Health Care Action Group, the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement, and Stratis Health.

MNCM was formed by major healthcare providers to publish "best care" standards and improve the quality of health care in Minnesota. Learn more on the MNCM Web site or in this recent profile of the group. EXIT Disclaimer

Attention Communities: New CVE Application Period Opens Next Month

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) will begin accepting applications for Chartered Value Exchanges on April 19, 2008. CVEs participate in a learning network and have special access to Medicare physician quality measurement results provided by CMS. The application period is open through mid-June. Read more online about the CVE designation and how collaboratives will benefit from being a part of the nationwide Learning Network.

Isn't It Time? Declare Your Support.

Learn more online about Value-Driven Health Care and sign up today to be a part of the movement toward better health care at lower cost.

"Every American should have access to a full range of information about the quality and cost of their health care options."

Secretary Michael O. Leavitt