



Issue Brief: Quality Care

Strengthen and improve quality measurement and development processes

Request

The Alliance of Specialty Medicine urges Congress to delay the implementation or repeal several provisions of the “Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act” (P.L. 111-148) that if implemented as written will be detrimental to patient care for those in the Medicare program.

Snapshot of the issue

The Alliance’s specialty association members are actively engaged in the process of developing evidence-based and clinically relevant quality measures and establishing data registries through initiatives within their own specialty and/or through the AMA’s Physician Consortium for Performance Improvement. We urge Congress to work with us to improve the quality of care for the patients we serve by preventing the implementation of the value-based purchasing section of the Affordable Care Act before all of the related demonstrations and accompanying reports have been completed. In addition, we believe that physicians who do not participate in the Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) should not face financial penalties for failing to do. We strongly believe that physician reporting for quality should be a voluntary, non-punitive process.

The bottom line

The 100,000 physicians represented by the Alliance are calling on Congress to delay the implementation or repeal several Medicare payment provisions which, if enacted, will be detrimental to patient care including:

- Punitive Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) which inappropriately penalizes physicians.
- Value-Based payment modifier to the physician fee schedule which arbitrarily accelerates the current value-based purchasing program before current demonstrations and previously mandated reports are completed.
- Geographic Variation which is used as a marker for quality of care, but is primarily focused on costs and cost reduction rather than treatment quality.
- Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation which inappropriately delegates Congress’s oversight responsibilities.

Background

While the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has been testing various models to improve quality over the past decade, CMS does not have the current capability to implement some of the proposals that were included in the Affordable Care Act. Historically, demonstration projects have been used by CMS to identify best practices but also to protect against well-intentioned programs that fail to achieve their stated objectives, or in some cases, actually deliver a lower standard of care. For that reason, CMS has traditionally waited until all of the information from the demonstration projects has been gathered, and the results have been communicated to the Congress. As practicing physicians, Alliance members understand the need to constantly seek to improve the quality of care for the patients we serve. However, in formulating policies to improve quality measurement, we urge the Congress to focus measurement development on patient outcomes, functional status, patient satisfaction, care coordination, and avoidable readmissions. Many readmissions represent good care and public policy should not deter these readmissions from occurring through payment penalties. Under no circumstances should cost trump quality, and information accrued from measures should be presented in a manner that is meaningful and actionable to both physicians and eventually patients.

The **Alliance of Specialty Medicine** is an organization of national medical societies, based in Washington, DC, which represents specialty physicians in the United States. This non-partisan group is dedicated to the development of sound federal health care policy that fosters patient access to the highest quality specialty care. Member organizations include: American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery; American Association of Neurological Surgeons; American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons; American Gastroenterological Association; American Society of Cataract & Refractive Surgery; American Urological Association; Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations; Congress of Neurological Surgeons; Heart Rhythm Society; National Association of Spine Specialists; and Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions. For more information, please visit www.specialtydocs.org.