

News Release

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Health Quality Partners' patient care model one of two best in nation

The Medicare Coordinated Care Demonstration (MCCD) yields hope for sicker and more expensive patients but doesn't solve all problems of cost and efficiency,

DOYLESTOWN, PA: A program designed by Health Quality Partners to help chronically ill Medicare patients manage their diseases and improve their health was acknowledged in the Feb. 11, 2009 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association as one of two successful efforts in a national demonstration sponsored by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

While the JAMA study acknowledged that the 13 other patient care models did not meet the demonstration project's goal of reducing costs and improving health outcomes, models developed by Health Quality Partners and Mercy Medical Center, IA, showed promise during the course of the six-year study.

Health Quality Partners' results were significant enough that CMS elected to extend the program through at least March 2010.

Health Quality Partners followed approximately 1,400 patients, half in an intervention group and half in a control group. The JAMA study found that overall, for their total population, Health Quality Partners intervention group costs were 12% lower than the control group, with savings of approximately 20% and a reduction of hospitalizations of 29% among patients with the highest severity, in addition to better health outcomes.

Patients in the intervention group reported increased satisfaction with their care, and their regular physicians reported that the interventions had a positive impact on their practices in addition to increasing the quality of patient care.

"Changing patient behaviors, improving their health outcome and generating savings are the great challenges facing the healthcare reform movement," said Kenneth D. Coburn, MD, MPH, president and CEO of Health Quality Partners. "We certainly haven't solved all those challenges but we've shown that significant improvement is possible."

Key to the unique success of the program was Health Quality Partners' close collaboration with approximately 65 primary care physician practices and four hospitals in Southeastern Pennsylvania for coordination of care, and in-person education and counseling for the intervention group provided by highly trained HQP Nurse Care Managers. Doylestown Hospital and its independent physicians provided care to a core

group of patients in the program that spanned an area from the Lehigh Valley to Central Bucks County.

“Face-to-face contact was an important feature in the program, and the JAMA article noted its effect on developing trust between the patient and nurse, and creating an environment that both encouraged and sustained the patient on his or her journey to improved health,” Dr. Coburn said.

Nurse contacts with patients in the intervention group included individual consultations either in their homes or in a physician’s office, and group meetings to counsel patients with similar diseases and to provide additional support and lifestyle behavior change interventions to the individual patient.

“We are very hopeful that the continuing work over the next 12 to 18 months will solidify JAMA’s finding on the success of our program, and create a further impetus to refine chronic care models and improve efficiency and outcomes,” Dr. Coburn added.

To that end, Health Quality Partners is participating in the Medicare Chronic Care Practice Research Network (MCCPRN), consisting of representatives from 11 other leading organizations in the field of geriatrics, care management and research, many of which were a part of the original MCCD. The group hopes to identify evidence-based practices to enhance and accelerate the evolution of effective care delivery models for the future.

Results of the JAMA study, while affirming Health Quality Partners, indicate that chronic care models still require refinement.

“We have been at this a long time – since the 2002 start of the demonstration project, and prior to this with the University of Pennsylvania Health System’ Office of Health and Disease Management and then through a regional risk contracting agreement called PennCare that involved 11 hospitals and more than 90,000 patients in eastern PA,” according to Sherry A. Marcantonio, senior vice president of Health Quality Partners.

“One of our high points was the selection of Health Quality Partners to be among the original 15 models in the demonstration project,” Ms. Marcantonio continued. “We reached a new pinnacle last year when, the third report to Congress, identified HQP as a promising site and we were selected to continue our program for two additional years. Now we have received this recognition from JAMA.”

“But the best times are ahead as further data is analyzed and the model is further refined to meet the objectives Medicare had hoped for when the demonstration project was designed.”

Health Quality Partners is not-for-profit health care quality improvement research and development organization, dedicated to the design and implementation of new care models that will improve population health outcomes and lower costs.