



NEWS

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Federal Agency Ranks Wisconsin #1 in Health Care Quality

MADISON (June 11, 2007) ----- The federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) today released data that showed Wisconsin is leading – in fact is number one – in the nation for health care quality. Wisconsin had the top overall health care quality score among all 50 states based on 129 measures that AHRQ used to evaluate health care performance.

“On several individual measures, Wisconsin scored better than average leading to the highest composite score of all states,” according to AHRQ’s Karen Ho, lead staff person for the National Healthcare Disparities Report.

AHRQ ranks the quality of a state’s health care system from weak to very strong. Wisconsin’s strongest performance measures were: appropriate discontinuation of antibiotics after surgery; giving a beta blocker within 24 hours of admission to a hospital for heart attack; pneumonia patients receiving appropriate care; number of diabetics who receive a A1c hemoglobin test; and the lowest number of HIV-deaths per 100,000 people.

“Quality health care means doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right way, for the right person—and having the best possible results. Wisconsin hospitals are always working to improve quality and to sustain it. This report confirms what is well known in the area of quality improvement; if you can measure it, you can improve it,” according to Dana Richardson, vice president of quality initiatives at the Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA).

In 2004, WHA launched the first voluntary hospital quality reporting Web site in the nation, CheckPoint (www.wicheckpoint.org). The first 10 measures that were used in CheckPoint, and publicly reported by 98 percent of the hospitals in Wisconsin, focused on measuring the care patients receive who are hospitalized with pneumonia, heart attack, or congestive heart failure. Public reporting creates a focus on improvement by prioritizing improvement resources and helping consumers understand the type of care that they should expect to receive from their health care provider.

“Over the past few years, several reports have been released evaluating the quality of care at the state level. We recognize that rankings depend on the measures included in the score, but Wisconsin consistently ranks high among top performing states,” said WHA President Steve Brenton. “Our status is clearly the result of private sector public reporting initiatives, like CheckPoint, that have been embraced by Wisconsin hospitals and physicians.”

While public reporting creates a measurement tool for improvement, the next step is changing processes to assure that the best care is provided to each patient. MetaStar, Wisconsin's Quality Improvement Organization (QIO), supports hospitals in their improvement efforts through projects that facilitate learning and sharing best practices among Wisconsin hospitals.

"Through shared learning Wisconsin hospitals can accelerate the pace of improvement. This assures that all Wisconsin residents have access to the highest quality of care," said Jay Gold, MD, JD, senior vice president at MetaStar.

AHRQ used a dashboard concept to display the data, because according to Ho, "People are familiar with the dashboard on their car to check to see how well it is performing. It was intuitive that displaying information in a similar manner for health care providers would give it a feeling of familiarity that would increase the public's ability to understand it."

According to AHRQ, its State Snapshots Web tool (<http://statesnapshots.ahrq.gov>) helps State health leaders, researchers, legislators and consumers understand the status of health care quality in individual states, including each state's strengths and weaknesses. AHRQ's annual State Snapshots is based on data drawn from more than 30 sources, including government surveys, health care facilities and health care organizations.

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