

Wisconsin Hospital Association, Inc.



NEWS

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Wisconsin Ranks in Top Ten on State Health System Scorecard *Commonwealth Fund State Scorecard rates access, quality, cost, healthy lives*

MADISON (June 13, 2007) ---- A state scorecard released by the Commonwealth Fund Commission on a High Performance Health System ranked Wisconsin ninth in the country across key dimensions of health system performance. According to the report, where you live in the United States does matter for health care quality and care experience.

The report shows that 13 states, including Wisconsin, emerge at the top quartile of the overall performance rankings, and these states generally ranked high on multiple indicators on the five dimensions assessed by the State Scorecard. The five dimensions included: access, quality, avoidable hospital use and costs, equity, and healthy lives.

Dana Richardson, vice president of quality initiatives at the Wisconsin Hospital Association, said hospitals here have a strong commitment to improving both the quality of the care they provide, as well as access.

“Better access is closely associated with better quality. That is why in Milwaukee, for example, and in many of our rural areas, it is a top priority to recruit and retain health care professionals, and then connect our patients to a primary care physician,” Richardson said. “Having a ‘medical home’ is vitally important to patients who suffer from a chronic illness,” she added.

Data in the report identifies Wisconsin as a high quality, low cost provider in the Medicare program. The report found that Medicare could save \$22 billion a year if high cost states moved down to spending levels of the average states, such as Wisconsin and others in the Midwest.

WHA President Steve Brenton said, “Wisconsin hospitals provide good value and high quality care to Medicare program beneficiaries. We know that a large percentage of senior citizens who leave the state and retire elsewhere, move back when they need health care because of the quality of our care. The ability to provide high quality, safe patient care is a core value in our hospitals.”

The striking variability across states adds up to substantial human and economic costs for the nation. The report estimates that if all states could do as well as the top states, 90,000 lives could be saved annually, 22 million additional adults and children would have health insurance, and millions of older adults, diabetics and young children would receive essential preventive care.

The report, *Aiming Higher: Results from a State Scorecard on Health System Performance*, compares each state to benchmarks that have already been achieved in states across the country. Although some states ranked highly on multiple indicators, the report finds that that no one or group of states scored top marks in every area.

While no single state performed at the top across all categories, some states far surpassed others. States in the Northeast and Upper Midwest often rank high in multiple areas. In contrast, states with the lowest rankings tend to be concentrated in the South.

“The differences we found between the top and bottom states were shocking, often a two-to three-fold variation or greater,” said co-author and Commonwealth Fund Senior Vice President Cathy Schoen. “Where you live clearly matters: for access to care when you need it, the quality of care you receive, and opportunities to live healthier lives.”

An overarching goal of the health care system, according to the Commonwealth report, is to contribute to long and healthy lives. The report ranked Wisconsin 27th in the percent of adults who are overweight or obese, and 28th in the percent of adults who smoke, two statistics that concern Wisconsin hospitals. In 2006, hospitals reached more than two million people in Wisconsin through their free clinics, health screenings, and nutrition and exercise classes, and a wide variety of other health programs designed to address specific public health concerns.

“Wisconsin hospitals, often in partnership with their local health departments, offer literally hundreds of free programs directed at improving the health and safety of the communities they serve,” Brenton said. “But their outreach efforts fall short without the support of the community. We encourage residents in every Wisconsin community to partner with their hospital and take advantage of the classes and programs they offer that are designed to reduce the rate of preventable diseases in our state. It is an investment in our own, and our children’s health, that we can’t afford to pass up.”

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