

**Clinical
Projects****Quality
Improvement****Payment
Error
Prevention
Program****Staff****Alaska
Diabetes
Collaborative****Health Care Quality Improvement Program**

To help improve health care quality in Alaska, Qualis Health has initiated several projects targeted toward hospital inpatient care and out-patient preventive care for the Medicare population. The quality indicators for most of these projects were determined on a national basis by HCFA and have been endorsed by JCAHO.

Inpatient Projects

Qualis Health Alaska's inpatient projects encompass acute myocardial infarction, heart failure, atrial fibrillation, stroke, and community acquired pneumonia. The quality indicators associated with improvement in the clinical areas generally address three types of management issues:

- Early and appropriate medication use
- Carry-through with preventive health measures
- Discharges on appropriate prophylactic medication

At the initiation of the Inpatient Projects, in November 1999, the Project Manager recruited participants for a Steering Committee to develop and test interventions to improve care in selected inpatient topics. The committee, which meets quarterly comprises representatives from seven urban and rural hospitals in Alaska. Committee members are testing the use of standing orders, protocols, guidelines, and a variety of other quality improvement tools. The Project Manager conducts audit and feedback, as requested, to help determine the hospital's progress on the QI project it is testing.

Audit and feedback consists of visiting a hospital, auditing charts for information specific to the QI project over a defined period of time, compiling the data collected, and summarizing clinical performance from the data. The results are presented to the hospital's health care providers, who revise and devise methodologies for continued improvement. During the data feedback phase, the Project Manager sometimes includes recommendations for clinical action.

Towards the end of 2001, the Steering Committee will compile the results of their quality improvement projects and will share successful tools with Alaska's medical community.

Other interventions to improve the quality of care in the inpatient projects include the following:

- Provide academic detailing at hospital Grand Rounds and physician gatherings to promote best practices, established guidelines, and protocols in support of the project indicators.
- Provide authoritative resource materials to all of Alaska's acute-care hospitals. Resources include printed educational materials particularly valued by facilities that have few, or no, resources for education. The mailing list of educational materials was recently expanded to include senior centers and assisted living facilities, and other facilities visited by seniors.
- Participate in the Alaska Health Care Quality Consortium and plan and facilitate the Excellence in Alaska forum, a health care quality improvement forum that takes place every two years. (The next forum is scheduled for February 2002.) The Consortium meets quarterly to share quality improvement activities taking place member facilities.
- Produce a newsletter, Quality Quest, three times a year, to help update all health care providers about quality improvement activities

in Alaska.

Karen Atherton, BSN, CPHQ, is the Inpatient Projects Manager.

Quality Quest

November 2000

Spring/Summer 2001

Fall/Winter 2001

Diabetes Collaborative

Together with the Alaska Diabetes Control Program, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, and the American Diabetes Association Alaska Area, Qualis Health is offering Alaska's first Diabetes Collaborative. The Collaborative is a seminar series that gives Alaska's health care providers the opportunity to work closely with expert faculty and each other in bringing about changes to the way diabetes is managed in the outpatient setting in our state. All practices in Alaska with Medicare enrolled diabetes patients were encouraged to participate. Thirteen clinics registered, and their quality improvement projects are well underway. For more specific information about the collaborative, click on the link below.

Immunizations Project

The aim of Qualis Health Alaska's Immunizations Project is to increase the number of Medicare beneficiaries who receive the influenza vaccine annually and the pneumococcal vaccine every six years. Qualis Health works closely with the Adult Immunization Workgroup of the Vaccinate Alaska Coalition to create improvement strategies targeted toward consumers and providers. (The coalition comprises representatives of more than 50 health care entities statewide.) The workgroup recently completed Alaska's first state-endorsed adult vaccination record, designed as a wallet-sized card similar to the state's official vaccination record for school-aged children. The card is now being distributed to all immunization providers in the state, as well as to those who care for the chronically ill. The committee's next project is to develop an educational display about adult immunizations for use at health fairs statewide.

During the 2000-2001 flu season, Qualis Health actively campaigned to increase public awareness about vaccinations by distributing posters promoting immunizations to senior centers, churches, libraries, and restaurants. In addition, opinion articles written by our Principal Clinical Coordinator about the benefits of vaccination were submitted to several Alaska newspapers and organization newsletters.

The following organizations partner with Qualis Health on the Adult Immunizations Workgroup:

- Medical Park Family Care
- Mobile Medical, Inc.
- Municipality of Anchorage
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
- Anchorage Itinerant Nursing
- Internal Medicine Association

Mammography Project

The goal of Qualis Health's mammography project is to increase the percentage of Medicare beneficiaries who receive an annual screening

mammogram. A special study within this project addresses the disparity in the rate of mammography usage between those women who are dually enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid and those who receive Medicare alone.

For many years, statewide efforts to promote mammography were supported by a coalition of women's health organizations, called the Alaska Breast & Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (AB&CEDP). Unfortunately, funding for the coalition's activities declined in the late 1990s, and the coalition subsequently disbanded. Qualis Health identified re-formation of a similar group as a statewide need. In fall of 2000, Qualis Health recruited members from interested organizations to form the Mammography Access Alaska Group, or MAAG, to help fill the gap left by the defunct AB&CEDP in coordinating efforts to fight breast cancer in Alaska. With the approval of MAAG members, Qualis Health in February 2001 distributed a letter to health care providers encouraging them to recommend mammograms to the female patients over 40. Enclosed with the letter were a mammogram prescription pad and a list of responses to the possible barriers women might voice to getting a mammogram. Distribution of an expanded mammography promotional toolkit to medical practice office managers is planned for May 2001.

The following organizations are represented on the MAAG:

- Alaska Health Fair, Inc.
- American Cancer Society
- Anchorage Senior Center
- Breast Cancer Detection Center
- Bridge Builders of Anchorage
- Denali Home Health
- Division of Public Assistance
- Providence Home Health Care
- Providence Imaging Center
- Older Persons Action Group
- Senior Advocacy Coalition
- Statewide Women's Health Partnership
- YWCA Encore

In other partnership building activities, Qualis Health recently joined the Statewide Women's Health Partnership, a group of community members and health care providers who are interested in improving the coordination of health care for women in Alaska. The partnership receives funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration and is promoted by the Alaska Primary Care Association. Goals of the partnership are to reduce health disparities for women in Alaska and to increase health education and outreach to Alaska women.

Aside from its partnership activity, the project team works on several other interventions to improve rates of mammography. Throughout the year, the team periodically submits short articles and opinion columns promoting mammography to state newspapers and to community council newsletters in the Anchorage area. In May, the team promotes the Bells for Remembrance and Mothers May campaigns. Additionally, the team continues to research why Alaskan women may decided not to get mammograms.

Immunizations in the Long-Term Care Setting

Alaska's Long-Term Care Immunizations project is designed to increase the percentage of long-term care residents who receive vaccinations against influenza and pneumococcal disease. Begun in 1998, this project

saw significant improvement in pneumococcal vaccination rates during the first year of intervention activity. Interventions consisted of one-to-one interaction with long-term care administrators or infection control managers to encourage them to check the pneumococcal vaccination status of their residents and vaccinate those who needed it. At the completion of the project's first phase, four months later, immunization rates had increased in the 26 participating facilities to 75% from an initial rate of 53%.

Another focus of project activity is to help participating facilities to establish standing orders and admissions protocols for vaccinations. In addition, the Project Manager plans to recruit a project Steering Committee during summer 2001 to identify educational needs and potential interventions to improve vaccination rates.

Michelle Holloway, MS, is the Long-Term Care Immunizations Project Manager.

[1999 report on immunizations in Alaska's long-term care facilities](#)

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