

Quality Measurement in the Health Insurance Marketplace

by Taylor Hightower

The Affordable Care Act called for the creation of what is now known as the Health Insurance Marketplace (sometimes also referred to as the “Health Insurance Exchange” or “Obamacare”) within each state. Through the Marketplace, individuals and small businesses are able to select and enroll in private health plans. The Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) is primarily responsible for establishing the standards and guidelines for the Exchanges. Health plans must meet certain standards to be certified as a qualified health plan (QHP) and be offered through the Marketplace. Every health plan sold in the Marketplace must offer at least 10 essential health benefits.

The HHS has developed the Quality Rating System (QRS), which is similar to the Five Star Quality Rating System used by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to rate Medicare Prescription Drug Plans (PDPs) and Medicare Advantage (MA-PD) plans. The QRS provides information so that consumers may compare plans and make an informed choice as well as to facilitate with regulatory oversight of the health plans.

Essential Health Benefits in the Health Insurance Marketplace

1. Outpatient care
2. Emergency room visits
3. Inpatient care
4. Prenatal and postpartum care
5. Mental health and substance use disorder services (including behavioral health treatment, counseling, and psychotherapy)
6. Prescription drugs
7. Services and devices related to injury or disability (including physical and occupational therapy, speech-language pathology, psychiatric rehabilitation, and more)
8. Lab tests
9. Preventative services (including counseling, screenings, and vaccines) and care for managing chronic disease
10. Pediatric services (including dental and vision care)

The QHP ratings are based on health care quality and outcomes, consumer experience, and cost. There are 43 quality measures, of which 29 were implemented in 2015, with the remaining 14 to be implemented in 2016 and 2017. Altogether there are 14 measures that relate to pharmacy practice.

DEFINITION OF PHARMACY QRS MEASURES

- **Adult BMI Assessment (ABA):** the percentage of members 18-74 years of age who had an outpatient visit and whose BMI was documented during the measurement year or the year prior to the measurement year.
- **Antidepressant Medication Management (AMM):** the percentage of members 18 years of age and older who were treated with antidepressant medication, had a diagnosis of major depression, and who remained on antidepressant medication treatment for at least 84 days during the effective acute phase of treatment and at least 180 days in the effective continuation phase treatment.
- **Aspirin Use and Discussion (ASD):** the percentage of members who are currently taking aspirin and the percentage of members who discussed the risks and benefits of using aspirin with a doctor or other health provider.
- **Childhood Immunization Status (CIS):** the percentage of children 2 years of age who have received the following vaccinations by their second birthday: four diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis (DTaP); one measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR); three hepatitis B (HepB); three hae-

2015 QRS Measures	2016 & 2017 QRS Measures
Comprehensive Diabetes Care: Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) Control (<8.0%)	Adult BMI Assessment
Comprehensive Diabetes Care: Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) Testing	Antidepressant Medication Management
Controlling High Blood Pressure	Childhood Immunization Status
Proportion of Days Covered	Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication
Flu Vaccinations for Adults Ages 18-64	Human Papillomavirus Vaccination for Female Adolescents
	Immunizations for Adolescents
	Medication Management for People with Asthma (75% of Treatment Period)
	Aspirin Use and Discussion
	Medical Assistance with Smoking and Tobacco Use Cessation

mophilus influenza type B (HiB), one chicken pox (VZV); and four pneumococcal conjugate (PCV).

- **Comprehensive Diabetes Care (CDC)—HbA1c Control:** the percentage of members 18-75 years with diabetes (type 1 and 2) whose most recent HbA1c was <8 percent.
- **Comprehensive Diabetes Care (CDC)—HbA1c Testing:** the percentage of member 18-75 years with diabetes (type 1 and 2) who had an HbA1c test performed during the measurement year.
- **Controlling High Blood Pressure (CBP):** the percentage of members 18-85 years who had a diagnosis of hypertension and whose BP was adequately controlled during the measurement year based on the following criteria:
 - Members 18-59 whose BP was <140/90 mmHg
 - Members 60-85 with diabetes whose BP was <140/90 mmHg
 - Members 60-85 without diabetes whose BP was <150/90 mmHg.
- **Flu Vaccinations for Adults Ages 18-64 (FVA):** the percentage of members 18-64 years of age who received a flu vaccination between July 1 of the measurement year and the date when the QHP Enrollee Survey was completed.
- **Follow-Up Care for Children Prescribed ADHD Medication (ADD):**

the percentage of children newly prescribed ADHD medication who had at least three follow-up care visits within a 10-month period, one of which was within 30 days of when the first ADHD medication was dispensed.

- **Human Papillomavirus Vaccine for Female Adolescents (HPV):** the percentage of female adolescents 13 years of age who had three doses of the HPV vaccine by their 13th birthday.
- **Immunizations for Adolescents (IMA):** the percentage of adolescents 13 years of age who meet the criteria for combo 1: one dose of meningococcal vaccine and one tetanus, diphtheria toxoids and acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap), or one tetanus, diphtheria toxoids vaccine (Td) by their 13th birthday.
- **Medical Assistance with Smoking and Tobacco Use Cessation (MSC):** the percentage of members 18 years or older who were current smokers and received advice to quit during the measurement year, who discussed or were recommended cessation medications during the measurement year, or who discussed or were provided cessation methods or strategies during the measurement year.
- **Medication Management for People with Asthma (MMA):** the percentage of members 5-64 years of age who were identified as having per-

sistent asthma and who remained on an asthma controller medication for at least 75 percent of their treatment period.

- **Proportion of Days Covered (PDC):** the percentage of patients 18 years and older who met the PDC threshold of 80 percent during the measurement period for each of the following:
 - Renin angiotensin system (RAS) antagonists
 - Diabetes all class
 - Statins

Now that purchasing health insurance is mandated by federal law, it only makes sense that health insurance plans have certain essential health benefits in common and that there is oversight to ensure the quality of the health insurance benefits. The incorporation of several measurements related to pharmacy underscore the role a pharmacist has in team-based patient care. The quality rating system summarized here is an important tool for health insurance purchasers who want to make informed decisions during the annual open enrollment period. ■

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