

A4: The National Quality Measures Clearinghouse: A strategic tool for developing quality improvement approaches

Leader/s: Slutsky JS, Coates V, Palmer H

Objective and rationale:

The U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) sponsors a clearinghouse for quality measures (www.qualitymeasures.ahrq.gov), introduced in February of 2003. This rich measure resource is freely available to the public. AHRQ's National Quality Measures Clearinghouse (NQMC) provides a framework for evaluating and describing quality measures and their application. Measures included in NQMC must meet specific evidence-based inclusion criteria. For each measure included in NQMC, a structured abstract is created that describes more than 60 key attributes pertaining to the use of the measure for quality improvement, accountability and research. The project has developed a methodology for defining and describing measure hierarchy and a nomenclature for naming measures.

The objectives of this workshop are to familiarize users with the full potential of the NQMC by discussing the approach to identifying and describing attributes of quality measures, learning how to use the NQMC Web site and database of measure summaries, learning ways to utilize NQMC in developing quality improvement strategies, and discussing the progeny of measures, including harmonization, description, and use of these measures.

Outline for Workshop content:

Participants will take part in a didactic and discussion format. Major components of the didactic portion of the workshop will cover the framework for development of NQMC, the methodology used in identifying key measure attributes and how they are coded, named, and presented at the NQMC Web site, what criteria measures must meet to be included in the projects, and case examples on how NQMC can be used for quality improvement. In particular, the workshop will offer the opportunity to discuss the hierarchy and lineage of measures and what impact these issues have on usability and interpretation. The discussion will be structured to include questions from the participants throughout the workshop. This basic workshop is intended as a companion to a more advanced workshop on a related project, the AHRQ-sponsored National Guideline Clearinghouse.

Introduction of Workshop

Developing the National Quality Measures Clearinghouse

- background
- identification of measure attributes
- inclusion criteria
- measure hierarchy and harmonization

Using the NQMC Web site

- searching for measures
- assessing measures
- comparing measures

Participant Discussion

- critical appraisal of measures
- case examples

Leadership:

Ms. Slutsky is acting director, Center for Practice and Technology Assessment, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (formerly AHCPH) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Rockville, MD. In this capacity, Ms. Slutsky oversees programs such as the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, Evidence-based Practice Centers, Technology Assessment, and National Guideline and Quality Measures Clearinghouses.