A look at health care quality and patient safety

This issue of the Wisconsin Medical Journal features a variety of quality and patient safety initiatives taking place at the national, state, and local levels.

At the national level, Doctor Nedza (WMJ. 2006;105(8):25) emphasizes the need for a paradigm shift in how we view the relationship between the individual and the health care system. She describes the effort at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to transform Medicare and Medicaid programs to support health care systems that are safe, effective, efficient, patient-centered, timely, and equitable. The American Medical Association is also committed to improving the quality of care and patient safety. Doctor Roberts and others present a study concluding that the public receives conflicting conclusions from reports about the state of health care quality.

Several initiatives are ongoing at the state level as well. Ms Nelson reports on the work of the Board on eHealth Care Quality and Patient Safety and the promise of eHealth to improve the health system (WMJ. 2006;105(8):28). Doctor Manning calls on physicians to accept the challenge of assuming responsibility for transitioning to electronic record systems and using performance data to make changes in practice patterns to provide the best possible care for all patients (WMJ. 2006;105(8):21). The Wisconsin Medical Society is very involved in this field. Drs Wiegmann and Helstad discuss the Society’s strategic initiatives and their relationship to the health care quality landscape (WMJ. 2006;105(8):30).

Other statewide groups are also making strides. Ms Bartels describes the work of the Wisconsin Health Information Organization (WMJ. 2006;105(8):33), a unique partnership between health care professionals, payers, and purchasers that will pool claims data across payers to report on episodes of care. Doctor Shabino and Ms Richardson report on the Wisconsin Hospital Association’s initiative CheckPoint, with an impressive 99% of hospitals voluntarily participating (WMJ. 2006;105(8):34). Doctor Gold and Ms Simmons describe the success of the 100,000 Lives Campaign and the numerous activities of MetaStar, Wisconsin’s Quality Improvement Organization, to achieve the 6 aims of the Institute of Medicine (WMJ. 2006;105(8):38). Ms Gaard discusses the goal of WEA Trust to help members appreciate greater value from their health care encounters by providing comprehensive educational materials, including practical tips and resources for improving communication with their health care professionals (WMJ. 2006;105(8):50).

Much work is being done at the local level as well. Ms Ruff and Doctor Saran (WMJ. 2006;105(8):45) describe how Waukesha Elmbrook Health Care, S.C. facilitates collaboration for smaller practices to participate in quality improvement by providing support, resources, and pooled data to generate statistically sound measurements of the improvement process. Doctor Hirsch and Ms Close-Gooden describe how quality metrics are used in a practice incentive model at Dean Health Plan in Madison, Wisconsin (WMJ. 2006;105(8):48). Doctor Merkitch and his colleagues look at how their institution has implemented strategies to achieve a high level of compliance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for the prevention of early-onset Group B streptococcal neonatal sepsis (WMJ. 2006;105(8):67).

Preventing medication errors has been the focus of several initiatives. Doctor Endo and Ms Jacobsen (WMJ. 2006;105(8):42) report on the efforts of the Madison Patient Safety Collaborative to improve patient care through medication reconciliation in hospitals. Doctor Leonhardt describes the work of the Medical Society of Milwaukee County Milwaukee Patient Safety Collaborative (WMJ. 2006;105(8):40) to eliminate the use of high-risk abbreviations written by physicians and to engage patients to maintain their own personal medication list. Doctor Leonhardt and colleagues also describe how medication safety interventions were developed through the collaborative work of a community-based advisory council in Walworth County (WMJ. 2006;105(8):54).

Finally, this issue features the proceedings from the 2006 Wisconsin Quality and Safety Forum projects, which cover an interesting variety of local efforts.
The mission of the Wisconsin Medical Journal is to provide a vehicle for professional communication and continuing education of Wisconsin physicians.

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