



Avalere Health Podcast: Quality Measurement and its Effect on Consumers

Scott Hymen: Hello and welcome to another Avalere Health Podcast. Today we are here once again with Debbie Lucas, a Director in our Evidence, Translation and Implementation (ETI) Practice, to talk about quality measurement.

Hi Debbie, when we left off, you and I were discussing how quality measures and current quality measurement programs impact various healthcare stakeholders (i.e. [life science companies](#), [providers](#), etc.). I'd like to now transition our discussion to the consumer. Can you tell us how quality measurement and reporting affects this population?

Debbie Lucas: Hi Scott. I suspect most consumers are unaware of why providers and healthcare facilities are measuring and reporting quality data to begin with, or how the information will ultimately be used. If you ask people what value-based purchasing (VBP) is, many will first think that it's about paying for healthcare differently to drive provider behavior to high quality care at an optimal cost. It is, but it's also about driving consumer behavior to choose providers and facilities that provide high quality care. The only way to accomplish either of these goals is through the reporting of healthcare information.

Scott Hymen: How is reporting of information to consumers done now?

Debbie Lucas: Until recently the types of publically available data on healthcare services were limited. You can, although not easily, find information on patient satisfaction and patient experience. Physician information found on practice, hospital or consumer websites generally includes board certification information, the number of years in practice and areas of focus. There are websites to look up information on hospital mortality and complication rates for common conditions and you can even compare this information across hospitals (e.g., Hospital Compare, Healthgrades). Same for home health and nursing homes. The majority of data currently reported are based on care provided to Medicare patients; it may or may not represent care provided to other populations. Publically reported data are lacking on the quality of ambulatory/outpatient care, where most patient care is provided, and much more hospital data could be reported.

Scott Hymen: Why isn't there more data available to the public?

Debbie Lucas: The current fee-for-service (FFS) reimbursement system does not necessitate a focus on outcomes for marketing services to consumers; however, the move, which is underway, toward VBP does. Therefore, moving forward, doctors and healthcare facilities alike

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must report on data, making it in their best interest to evaluate outcomes of care on a continuous basis.

The ability to collect and capture data from electronic health records (EHRs) is also revolutionizing how quality of care can be assessed and reported. Most providers if asked today cannot tell you how many patients they treat with certain conditions, or how well they treat them. This will change as we transition into a VBP system, and it will also change as the use of EHRs improves and quality measure reporting advances.

Scott Hymen: It seems clear that consumers will have a lot more comparative information at their disposal in the near future. So I have to ask, what is the best way to present this information?

Debbie Lucas: Well, Scott, that's the \$64,000 question. There is a lot of focus on the need for consumers to take an active role in their care in order to improve outcomes and minimize cost. To encourage this, employers and public and private health plans are shifting more of the cost of care to consumers and are starting to provide both cost and quality of care information to them, helping them to become more "informed shoppers" of healthcare services. Cost information is "relatively" easy to understand; however, quality of care information is not. As the shift to VBP continues, identifying how to best present information to consumers is needed.

In general, for data to be of benefit to consumers it needs to be displayed in a way to support decision-making. There are a number of websites that have information on doctors and hospitals and sites such as *Hospital Compare* that compare quality of care information, such as readmission rates between hospitals. I have used this site, and the information isn't very meaningful to me. For instance, there isn't an easy way to see if my providers have privileges at a given hospital. Consumer Reports has created a guide to doctor ratings, and started small with data on primary care doctors in four states as well as some heart surgery groups. Even so, connecting the dots between health plan coverage, providers and hospitals is needed. As more quality information is released publically, expect organizations such as Consumer Reports and public and private payers to create tools to help consumers make these important cost/benefit decisions on healthcare services.

For any presentation of healthcare information to be used, people need to know it's available. There will be many opportunities for healthcare stakeholders to raise consumer awareness of the availability of quality of care and cost data and help them understand what it means and how to use it.

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Scott Hymen: Thanks Debbie. As a healthcare consumer, I see how the availability of more data will truly help drive my healthcare decision making. I'm anxious for all of these steps to take way, something that is certain to make my healthcare shopping easier and more efficient.

Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me today, Debbie. I hope throughout our three part series on quality measurement, everyone was able to grasp how important of an area this is. If anyone has any questions for Debbie, please contact her at DLucas@Avalere.com.