Prevention Quality Indicators

A tool to help assess quality and access to health care in the community.

What are the Prevention Quality Indicators?

The Prevention Quality Indicators (PQIs) are a set of measures that can be used with hospital inpatient discharge data to identify "ambulatory care sensitive conditions" (ACSCs) in adult populations. ACSCs are conditions for which good outpatient care can potentially prevent the need for hospitalization, or for which early intervention can prevent complications or more severe disease.

Even though these indicators are based on hospital inpatient data, they provide insight into the quality of the health care system outside the hospital setting. Patients with diabetes may be hospitalized for diabetic complications if their conditions are not adequately monitored or if they do not receive the patient education needed for appropriate self-management. Patients may be hospitalized for asthma if primary care providers fail to adhere to practice guidelines or to prescribe appropriate treatments. Patients with appendicitis who do not have ready access to surgical evaluation may experience delays in receiving needed care, which can result in a life-threatening condition—perforated appendix. Rates of low birth weight can be reduced by providing mothers with adequate prenatal care.

The PQIs consist of the following 14 ACSCs, which are measured as rates of admission to the hospital:

- **Adult Asthma Admission Rate**
- **Angina without Procedure Admission Rate**
- **Bacterial Pneumonia Admission Rate**
- **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Admission Rate**
- **Congestive Heart Failure Admission Rate**
- **Dehydration Admission Rate**
- **Diabetes Short-term Complications Admission Rate**
- **Diabetes Long-term Complications Admission Rate**
- **Hypertension Admission Rate**
- **Low Birth Weight Rate**
- **Rate of Lower-extremity Amputation among Patients with Diabetes**
- **Perforated Appendix Admission Rate**
- **Urinary Tract Infection Admission Rate**
- **Uncontrolled Diabetes Admission Rate**

A detailed *Guide to Prevention Quality Indicators*, software, and software documentation are available on the AHRQ Quality Indicators web site: http://qualityindicators.ahrq.gov/pqi_download.htm.

How can the PQIs be used in quality assessment?

The PQIs assess the quality of the health care system as a whole, and especially the quality of ambulatory care, in preventing medical complications. As a result, these measures are likely to be of the greatest value when calculated at the population level and when used by public health groups, State data organizations, and other organizations concerned with the health of populations.

These indicators serve as a screening tool rather than as definitive measures of quality problems. They can provide initial information about potential problems in the community that may require further, more in-depth analysis. Policy makers and health care providers can use the PQIs to answer questions such as:

- How does the low birth weight rate in my State compare with the national average?

- Does the admission rate for diabetes complications in my community suggest a problem in the provision of appropriate outpatient care to this population?

- How does the admission rate for congestive heart failure vary over time and from one region of the country to another?

State policy makers and local community organizations can use the PQIs to assess and improve community health care. For example, an official at a State health department wants to gain a better understanding of the quality of care provided to people with diabetes in her State. She selects the four PQIs related to diabetes and applies the statistical programs downloaded from the AHRQ Web site to hospital discharge data collected by her State.