



PQA Quality Connection

*A Bi-Monthly Briefing on PQA Initiatives
and Broader News about High Quality
Healthcare Issues*

PQA Member Spotlight

Meet Peter Wickersham, President, Government Programs at Express Scripts

The health care landscape is in a significant period of transition from volume to valued-based care. This transition impacts health plans and organizations at every level. How does an organization stay engaged with changes in quality measures and the dynamic shift to value-based models?

PQA Board Chair **Peter Wickersham** talks about his passion for maximizing the benefit and quality of prescription drug programs while driving down costs, and how he has partnered with PQA to impact health care quality on the national level during this season of transition.



Q: Tell us a little about yourself, your background, and your passion for quality?

I entered pharmaceutical research and development 20 years ago as a biostatistician. Quickly I became interested in the business aspect of pharmacy, transitioning into the health-plan owned pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) space working for Aetna, Mercer, Cigna, and Prime Therapeutics. Through these experiences, I discovered my mission to optimize the cost-benefit relationship of prescription drugs. I have been pressing toward this goal for my entire career and am excited to continue this by leading government programs at Express Scripts.

Quality measures became very real to me when clients asked us what we were doing to help them improve their STAR rating scores. Since they were holding us accountable to enhance quality of care, my interest in this area clearly increased dramatically!

Q: In your current role, how does your work influence the changing healthcare system as we continue to transition from volume to value?

I have the unique opportunity to influence change in my role at Express Scripts. We are accountable for the strategic direction and operational compliance of government program markets, including Medicare, Medicaid and Individual Exchange markets. As such, we interact with both payers and governmental agencies to advance the use of quality measures in these programs and to design products that include them. We have to consider how these markets can further incorporate quality measures.

This is where the transition from volume to value-based care comes in. If you think of the transition like a football game, we are at halftime with another half still to play. For example, MACRA is focused on physician quality, but where do pharmacists and pharmacy services fit in? Medicare is light years ahead of other government programs in terms of quality measures, so how can Medicaid as well as individual and commercial markets catch up? These questions do not have easy answers, but I am excited to be exploring potential opportunities through my roles at Express Scripts and at PQA.

Q: Describe your past and current involvement with PQA.

I had first heard about PQA through a previous employer who was actively engaged in its measure development process. They had also participated in a demonstration project that helped to launch PQS. I was excited about the opportunity to get more involved with PQA! I entered the Board in 2013 and have tried to be as active as possible. Currently, I serve on the executive committee and as Chairman of the Board, having worked through the roles of member-at-large and vice chair over the past two years.

Q: For you, what do you gain by your engagement with PQA?

For me, I hope that I give as much as I get, because I get a lot from my engagement. The diversity of expertise across the PQA membership base is simply unparalleled. I literally learn something relevant to my everyday job every time I meet with

someone related to PQA or when I attend one of PQA's conferences. The benefits of engaging with PQA are completely mutual!