



Hot off the Press: Connections to Key Quality Publications

Hot off the Press seeks to connect the reader to the most relevant and recent trials, reviews and commentaries related to health care quality within a focus on medication- and pharmacy-related topics.

Medication Synchronization Programs Improve Adherence to Cardiovascular Medications and Health Care Use

Successful management of particular health conditions frequently necessitate the use of elaborate treatment strategies. A pillar of these strategies is often drug therapy. Successful disease management is dependent upon premium adherence rates that may become compromised by disorganized medication fills, which can yield extra visits to the pharmacy. Medication synchronization programs aim to organize a patient's drug therapy refill schedule and boost adherence rates. A 2018 study, produced by Harvard Medical School, observed the implications of medication synchronization programs and their impact on drug therapy adherence rates.

Two synchronization programs were evaluated on their overall impact on adherence to cardiovascular medications and cardiovascular events. Retrospective analysis, directed between 2011 and 2014, compared patients enrolled in synchronized medication dispensing programs to those not enrolled and suggested a potential benefit to the former. Those patients enrolled in synchronized medication dispensing programs displayed an improved drug therapy adherence rate. Looking at the mean proportion of days covered

(PDC) – the medication adherence methodology used in PQA measures - enrolled patients experienced an adherence rate of 87% in comparison to an adherence rate of 84% experienced by the non-medication synchronized group, which demonstrated statistical significance. Additionally, hospitalizations and emergency room visits for patients enrolled in synchronized medication dispensing programs accordingly occurred at a suppressed rate of 9% and 3%, respectively, when compared to patients not enrolled in such a program.

Improved patient adherence towards prescription drug therapies may continue to be supported by various initiatives, including those detailed within the study. Opportunities also exist for PQA involvement that go beyond the PDC measure. The development of quality measures that also aim to address the underlying components compromising prescription medication adherence such as -*Access to Care*-, another measure under development within PQA, may also play a critical role in achieving optimized adherence rates and ultimately improving patient outcomes.

Citation: Krumme A, Glynn R, Schneeweiss S et al. Medication Synchronization Programs Improve Adherence To Cardiovascular Medications And Health Care Use. *Health Affairs*. 2018;37(1):125-133. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2017.0881.

GOVERNORS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FEDERAL ACTION TO END THE NATION'S OPIOID CRISIS:

The opioid crisis remains at the forefront of topic discussions related to the current state of the US healthcare system. In 2017 the White House administration officially classified the epidemic as a public health emergency. The National Governors Association (NGA) recognizes the federal government's progress to combat the issue to date, however due to the immensity of the epidemic, NGA members have recently come together to produce additional recommendations that continue to support and build upon current federal actions. Some recommendations provided to congress by the NGA include:

- *Increasing federal support of state efforts to address the opioid crisis*
- *Improving coordination within and across federal agencies involved in responding to the opioid crisis*
- *Strengthening data monitoring initiatives and information sharing environments.*
- *Providing evidence-based training initiatives on prevention and early intervention.*
- *Affording Medicaid programs, the ability and flexibility to offer the complete continuum of evidence-based care involving treatment and recovery*
- *Enhancing the support of public safety through counter drug programs*

PQA is strategically positioned to develop and implement performance measures that support optimal medication safety and use. Currently PQA has four PQA-endorsed quality measures related to opioid utilization. As the opioid crisis continues to evolve, it remains important to recognize not only the opportunity but also the responsibility of PQA to consider the possible positive ramifications that our measures may have in combating this healthcare crisis.

Citation: *Governors Release Recommendations For Addressing Opioid Epidemic.*; 2018. Available at: <https://www.nga.org/cms/home/news-room/news-releases/2018--news/col2-content/governors-release-recommendation.default.html>. Accessed January 23, 2018.