

Providing Performance Information for Consumers: Experience from the United States

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ABSTRACT

This paper will provide a market-based example of using performance measurement to promote health care quality improvement. Underlying this approach is a model of informed consumers making choices among competing health care providers based on cost and quality. Providing information to consumers on quality creates incentives for providers to improve their performance as they attempt to maintain or expand their market share. The paper will focus on efforts in the United States to provide performance information to consumers. It will begin by providing an overview of current performance measurement efforts in the United States, including the Consumer Assessment of Health Plans (CAHPS), the Health Plan Employer Data and Information Set (HEDIS), and other national and state measurement and reporting efforts. It will then provide a more in depth case study of the development and implementation of CAHPS. This is an initiative that asks survey respondents to give reports and ratings of the care they received through their health plans. Results are summarized by health plan and made available to the public to help guide consumer choice. It is estimated that CAHPS data are available on health plans that serve approximately 90 million Americans. The case study will highlight lessons learned. The paper will then summarize current empirical literature on the effects of efforts to provide performance information to consumers on quality improvement. In brief, these efforts are in their early stages and have not yet had a large impact. The paper will conclude by discussing approaches to improve the effectiveness of consumer reporting efforts, including: increasing consumer awareness of the availability and utility of performance information, developing decision support tools to help consumers use cost and performance data more easily in making decisions, and using local information intermediaries to help guide and support consumers.