



CMS 2024 Quality Conference – Resilient and Ready Together Creating an Optimal Environment for Quality Healthcare for Individuals, Families, and Communities

April 8-10, 2024, Hilton Baltimore Inner Harbor

The annual 2024 CMS Qual Con focused on advancements and challenges in healthcare quality improvement. This was the first in-person event since 2020 given the public health emergency of COVID-19. The common vision in CMS' words was "Resilient and Ready Together: Creating an Optimal Environment for Quality Healthcare for Individuals, Families, and Communities." Key themes included leveraging technology for data analytics, enhancing patient engagement, and addressing health disparities. Experts shared insights on value-based care models, emphasizing the importance of outcomes measurement and population health management. Discussions also highlighted strategies for integrating social determinants of health into care delivery and optimizing healthcare workforce capacity. Overall, the conference underscored the imperative of collaboration across stakeholders to drive continuous improvement in healthcare quality and outcomes through the CMS National Quality Strategy (NQS). It was repeatedly stated by CMS staff that there is "no quality without equity and safety."

Key discussions highlighted a diverse set of topics, including:

1. **Patient Safety:** CMS continues to support efforts to promote a holistic safety culture for patients and the health care workforce ("zero harm), and going beyond traditional medical errors and including diagnostic safety and safe use of AI/EHRs.
2. **Technology Integration:** Sessions explored the integration of advanced technologies such as AI, interoperability standards, and data analytics to improve healthcare quality and monitoring and move all measures to digital.
3. **Patient Engagement:** Discussions included patient advocates who emphasized strategies for enhancing patient engagement in healthcare decision-making and care management to promote better outcomes.

4. **Value-Based Care Models:** Experts shared insights on evolving value-based care models, focusing on outcomes measurement, payment reform, and care coordination primarily from CMMI (Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation).
5. **Health Equity:** Sessions highlighted efforts to address health disparities through targeted interventions and the integration of social determinants of health into care delivery.
6. **Workforce Optimization and System Resiliency:** Strategies for optimizing the healthcare workforce capacity and skills to meet the evolving demands of quality improvement and population health management in the context of potential natural disasters and public health emergencies.
7. **Collaboration:** The importance of collaboration within DHHS and among stakeholders, including providers, payers, policymakers, and patients, was underscored as essential for driving continuous improvement in healthcare quality and outcomes.

Sessions Attended:

1. All Grand Plenary Sessions (summarized above)
2. CMS Quality Improvement & Innovation Successes: The 12th Statement of Work Experience (QIN-QIO)
3. Top of the List: Ensuring Transplant Readiness in Those Likely to Soon Receive an Organ Offer
4. Home Therapy Innovation Through Culture Change (Fresenius presented – Reid wasn't able to attend due to simultaneous sessions)
5. What Matters Most! A Patient-Led Approach to Identifying and Prioritizing Patient-Reported Measures
6. Addressing Health-related Social Needs (HRSN) of Patients with Kidney Disease
7. Improving Outcomes in Organ Donation and Transplantation: The Organ Transplant Affinity Group (OTAG) Action Plan
8. Bridging the Gaps in the Kidney Transplant Journey: New Collaboration in CKD

Summary of Kidney Care Key Points from the Breakout Sessions:

- Optimizing transplantation of organs and kidneys to ensure those patients who are likely to soon receive an organ offer are prepared to accept. The patient's voice was emphasized during this session and throughout – CMS is making this a priority. Lutheran Hospital started the enhanced patient preparation called "Top of the List"

in the Spring of 2023 with the focus on building collaborative and standardized processes between the dialysis facility and transplant program. Based on outcomes data that is still being collected, the process shows potential to increase organ offer acceptance and simplify the activities when the offer is made.

- There is a heightened awareness from the White House and across CMS and DHHS to improve patient experiences and outcomes. There has been limited incorporation of PREs (Patient Reported Experience) and PROs (Patient-Reported Outcomes) by the patient communities. Patients for Patient Safety US Project PIVOT has the goal to identify, validate, and prioritize patient-reported measures especially to address marginalized populations with disparate outcomes.
- Continued efforts to address provider burden, payer alignment, and collaboration of measure development and implementation around core areas. CMMI and LAN (Learning and Action Networks) are focused on new models to create closer alignment over time and align with delivery system reform.
- Focusing on HRSNs (Health Related Social Needs) and Health Equity as a foundational piece of whole-person care. Housing instability, mental health strain, transportation needs, food insecurity, and other HRSNs continue to be a challenge for dialysis care as well as strategies to ensure transplantation services are equitable and accessible.