

THE NATIONAL QUALITY FORUM

IMPROVING USE OF PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

PURPOSE

This project will establish a national "safe medication use framework" aimed at increasing the effectiveness of prescription medication use by consumers, focusing especially on low-literacy and limited English proficiency (LEP) populations. The project will make recommendations about the feasibility and appropriateness of establishing evidence-based safe medication use practices but will not endorse specific practices per se.

BACKGROUND

Poor adherence to prescription medication use recommendations is both common and costly. One Study found a 76% discrepancy between what medicines patients were prescribed and what medicines (prescription and non-prescription) were actually taken. Noncompliance with recommended medication use has been found to be an underlying cause of up to 22% of hospitalizations. Not surprisingly, compliance in low-literacy and LEP populations is especially problematic because of the difficulty in understanding proper medication usage instructions.

Despite attempts by many entities to address this issue, large-scale improvement has not occurred. There is an acute need to identify and systematically deploy standardized practices that will increase safe medication use. Ideally, this would be done within an overarching framework for promoting safe and effective medication use.

SCOPE

While the project will apply to patient medication use generally, it will particularly focus on safe and effective prescription medication use by low-literacy and LEP populations. Specifically, the project will involve:

- 1) a comprehensive review of practices for promoting safe and effective medication use;
- 2) development of a comprehensive national framework for evaluating and implementing practices that will increase patient compliance with medication use instructions; and
- 3) a "stakeholders workshop" to evaluate the evidence and proposed framework and recommend an action plan for improving compliant medication use in general, and among low-literacy and LEP populations in particular, as well as to recommend strategies for pursuing standardized "safe medication use practices" in the future.

THE NQF PROCESS

This project, like all NQF activities, will involve the active participation of representatives from across the spectrum of healthcare stakeholders. The project will include a workshop and also broadly seek the input of relevant stakeholders to generate recommendations about how to establish national strategies for improving patient compliance in medication use, including potentially providing the groundwork for future consideration under the formal NQF Consensus Development Process.

FUNDING

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