

## MEASURING AND REPORTING THE QUALITY OF HEALTHCARE FOR MINORITY POPULATIONS

### PURPOSE

To examine the measures used to assess and report the quality of healthcare provided for minority populations in the United States.

### BACKGROUND

The need to assess healthcare quality metrics specific to minority populations is particularly acute because of the significant disparities that persist in health and healthcare outcomes for minority populations in the United States. It has long been recognized that even when socioeconomic factors are accounted for, minority patients who have access to healthcare experience differences in the quality of care they receive when compared with Caucasian patients.

African Americans with colorectal cancer, for example, are treated less aggressively than Caucasians with similar socioeconomic characteristics. Differences in cardiovascular treatments among African Americans, Latinos, or women and Caucasians are also well documented. Moreover, poor quality of care for minority populations is not limited to acute care and can be unsettlingly subtle. For example, African American and Hispanic patients receiving palliative care in New York City were less able than Caucasian patients to obtain prescribed medication for pain management because pharmacies in predominantly non-Caucasian communities did not have, or had insufficient supplies of, opioid analgesics.

Despite increased attention to disparities in the quality of healthcare for minority populations in the United States, there has been scant attention to measurement and reporting for these populations.

### SCOPE

This project will commission background papers and convene an expert workgroup to address:

- whether there are specific measures that can or should be used to assess the quality of healthcare specifically for minority populations;
- whether existing, commonly used healthcare quality measures are being utilized for minority populations in the same manner as they are used elsewhere and whether data collection specific to minority populations raises unique challenges; and
- whether existing mechanisms to assess and report healthcare quality are adequate for minority populations.

### THE NQF PROCESS

This project, like all NQF activities, involves the active participation of representatives from across the spectrum of healthcare stakeholders. The workgroup will meet on June 28-29, 2001 in Washington, DC, and a workshop summary, including recommendations for future actions, will be produced.

### FUNDING

Funding for this project has been provided by a grant from the Commonwealth Fund.

*For more information, contact Helen W. Wu at 202.332.7014.*