

# THE NATIONAL QUALITY FORUM

## National Voluntary Consensus Standards for Ambulatory Care: Additional Outpatient Measures 2010

### The Opportunity

NQF has endorsed a wide variety of ambulatory care measures for assessment of the quality of care provided in outpatient facilities such as hospital outpatient departments (HOPD), emergency departments, urgent care facilities, ambulatory surgery centers, community health centers as well as clinician offices. As more NQF-endorsed measures are implemented, the demand for measures to fill important gaps is growing. The implementation and reporting of quality measures for hospital outpatient services builds on previous efforts in the inpatient area, having the same purpose. Endorsement of measures is intended to encourage hospitals and clinicians to improve their quality of care and to empower consumers with quality information to make informed decisions about their health care.

Ambulatory medical care is the predominant method of providing health care services in the United States and occurs in a wide range of settings. The largest proportion of ambulatory care services occurs in physician offices. Moreover, approximately 11 percent of all ambulatory medical care visits in the United States occur in the ED.<sup>1</sup> From 1996 through 2006, the number of ED visits increased from 90.3 million to 119.2 million visits annually, a 32% increase.<sup>2</sup> Yet the number of hospital EDs in the United States decreased by about 12.4 percent during the same period. Demand and capacity issues have contributed to increased patient wait-time and decreased physician productivity, and they place patients at risk for poor outcomes.

From the Medicare perspective, 17% of ED visits are covered by this payment source. Since 2008, CMS has adopted outpatient measures specifically addressing ED and ambulatory surgical center quality of care. CMS projects that total payments for services furnished to people with Medicare in HOPDs during CY 2010 under the Outpatient Prospective Payment System (OPPS) will be \$32.2 billion, while total projected CY 2010 payments under the ASC payment system will be approximately \$3.4 billion. To date, NQF has endorsed measures for these healthcare facilities, but few measures have been endorsed beyond process measures.

### About the Project

This project began in December 2009.

### Objectives

The National Quality Forum seeks to identify and endorse additional measures of outpatient care addressing emergency department and/or urgent care and ambulatory surgery for public reporting and quality improvement.

### Process

The candidate measures will be considered for NQF endorsement as national voluntary consensus standards. Agreement will be developed through NQF's [Consensus Development Process](#) (CDP, Version 1.8). This project involves the active participation of representatives from across the spectrum of healthcare stakeholders. Due to the different expertise required for the two focal areas, two Steering Committees will be convened to consider proposed consensus standards.

## Funding

This project is supported under a contract provided by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

## Related NQF Work

- [Emergency Care: Phase I](#)
- [Emergency Care: Phase II](#)
- [Ambulatory Care Part 2](#)

## Contact Information

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<sup>1</sup> Schappert SM, Rechtsteiner EA. Ambulatory medical care utilization estimates for 2006. National health statistics reports; no 8. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2008. Available from: [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr008.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr008.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Pitts SR, Niska RW, Xu J, Burt CW. National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey: 2006 emergency department summary. National health statistics reports; no 7. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2008.