



Behavioral Health Standing Committee October 2016 Off-Cycle Webinar

The National Quality Forum (NQF) convened a public webinar for the Behavioral Health Standing Committee on Wednesday October 19, 2016. This webinar was held in response to a request for an ad hoc review submitted by RAND regarding *Measure 0004 – Initiation and Engagement of Alcohol or Other Drug-Dependence Treatment (IET)*, a measure maintained by NCQA. An archived recording of the webinar is available for playback.

Welcome, Introductions, and Review of Webinar Objectives

Tracy Lustig, Senior Director with NQF began by welcoming participants to the webinar. Dr. Lustig provided opening remarks and reviewed the content of *Measure 0004*. Dr. Lustig then reviewed the meeting objectives:

- Discuss concerns raised by RAND
- Discuss NCQA's proposed plan for future measure update
- Committee discussion to review and provide any recommendations for future endorsement consideration

Memos from RAND and NCQA were shared with the committee in advance of the meeting, and are publicly available. Dr. Lustig noted that today's discussion is meant to be informational and serve as a foundation for when the measure is scheduled for its maintenance of endorsement.

Statement from RAND

Soeren Mattke and Kate Watkins, representing RAND, provided an overview of their issues raised in the memo submitted to NQF. Dr. Mattke stated that medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is an evidence-based and guideline-recommended practice to support patients with substance abuse. RAND's overall concern is that the use of MAT should also be captured in the measure in addition to the current definition of treatment. Dr. Mattke noted that RAND had done an empirical evaluation on the incremental effects of including MAT, the results of which are included in the full memo, noting that the omission of MAT as a type of therapy affects the measure rate. He noted that their evaluation found a significant risk for misclassification. In response to a question, Dr. Mattke stated their evaluation was sponsored by Alkemists, a pharmaceutical company that manufactures one of the medications used in MAT.

Statement from NCQA

Junqing Liu, Mary Barton, and Bob Rehm, representing NCQA, provided an overview of their proposed work plan for re-evaluating *Measure # 0004*. Dr. Liu stated that NCQA is currently planning to re-evaluate this measure based on new evidence and whether to include MAT in combination with psychosocial care. Dr. Liu noted that most guidelines recommend MAT in conjunction with psychosocial care. Based on their review, any recommended updates will go through the NCQA process, including a public comment period in February 2017. The update would be effective in HEDIS 2018 (published in July 2017). Dr. Barton noted that the re-evaluation will go beyond just looking at the inclusion of MAT, but will look across all of the evidence, including modes of therapy, kinds of therapy, and timelines of therapy. Dr. Liu added that they will also be evaluating primary versus secondary diagnosis of alcohol and other drug dependence.

Committee Discussion

After statements from RAND and NCQA, the committee had an open discussion. Committee members shared concerns about the omission of MAT from the measure, but also concerns about evidence.

Several committee members urged NCQA to look at the primary clinical trials and not rely solely on clinical guidelines, noting that there is clinical evidence showing that MAT alone is still somewhat effective in treating addiction.

Committee members also noted that individuals often receive MAT and psychosocial counseling in two different locations, and so the measure needs to be structured so as to not double count these individuals. This also raised concerns for how the data on a single individual can be integrated for the purposes of the measure. Dr. Barton stated that individuals would only be counted once in the numerator.

Other issues raised by the committee included the effect of the presence of a screening program in the care setting. Dr. Barton agreed that this is a concern, noting that there may be the need for a sequence of measures in the future that looks at screening alongside treatment.

Further, committee members questioned whether initiation and engagement of treatment for alcohol use should be separated from that of drug dependence (e.g., opioids). Dr. Barton noted that NCQA is working on a measure for the health plan set that is based on PQA's opioid overuse measures. She added that they are also working, with support from SAMHSA, on a measure that looks at alcohol screening and brief intervention.

Opportunity for Public Comment

Dr. Lustig then opened the call up to NQF membership and the public for comment. Deb Potter from HHS/ASPE noted that the Secretary of HHS has an initiative around opioids, and one of the goals is to advance the use of MAT. She also stated that in early 2016, HHS conducted a review of various quality measures of behavioral health, including substance abuse, that are used across HHS programs, noting that *Measure 0004* is used in multiple reporting programs. She added that ASPE has compiled a report on clinical guidelines around MAT and that report includes a summary table rating the various sources of evidence on this topic. Potter further added that several Medicaid programs require the use of counseling as a pre-requisite for the use of MAT. She concluded by agreeing that a review of the literature, particularly the most recent literature, really needs to be examined carefully. She noted that there's a lot of work going on in this area, and much of it can only be accessed by going directly to key journals and other sources because they are not yet searchable in various search mechanisms.

In closing, Dr. Lustig thanked webinar participants for their participation. Dr. Lustig informed the participants of the new upcoming phase of the Behavioral Health Standing Committee, including the ability to nominate people for open seats on the Committee through November 9. She also noted that new measures to be considered for endorsement need to be submitted by December 2. All information about the new phase of the project is available on the [NQF website](http://www.qualityforum.org).