Chief Complaint Committee Web Meeting

The National Quality Forum (NQF) convened a public web meeting for the Chief Complaint-Based Quality of Emergency Care Committee on November 28, 2018.

Welcome, Introductions, and Review of Web Meeting Objectives

Ashlie Wilbon, NQF Senior Director, welcomed participants to the web meeting. Ameera Chaudhry, NQF Project Analyst, conducted roll call. Following this, Ms. Wilbon provided opening remarks and reviewed the following meeting objectives:

- Reach Committee consensus on terminology and definitions
- Understand the landscape of chief complaint standardization and nomenclature as the foundation for in-person meeting discussion and Committee recommendations
- Begin thinking about chief complaint-based measure development considerations
- Discuss preparation for the in-person meeting and Committee inputs needed

Review of Project Scope and Approach

Ms. Wilbon provided a brief review of the project scope and approach to the Committee. She reiterated the scope of this project and the approach for meeting the project goals. The scope centers on five elements including:

- Determine which measures are needed to improve chief complaint-based quality measurement
- Determine what data elements are needed for chief complaint-based quality measurement
- Determine how standardized data elements should be used in chief complaint measures
- Determine how chief complaint data elements should be standardized
- Determine a pathway towards widespread development and implementation of chief compliant-based measures

Summary of Discussions and Inputs to Date

Arjun Venkatesh, Committee Co-chair, provided an overview of working definitions for the following terms to be used over the course of the project and upon which future recommendations will be based:

- Chief complaint
- Reason for visit
- Presenting problem
- Clinical syndrome

These working definitions were established using existing definitions and further developed using Committee input. Helen Haskell, a Committee member representing the patient/caregiver perspective, provided insight on how the phrase "chief complaint" can be perceived to be

unfavorable by patients due to the negative connotation of the word "complaint." There was also concern that the use of presenting problem, the clinician's interpretation of the patient's chief complaint, as the basis for quality measurement might distort the patient's perspective and could be improperly or negatively interpreted by a clinician (e.g., a chief complaint of pain is interpreted as drug-seeking). Dr. Venkatesh acknowledged this concern and agreed that while we will continue to use the term "chief complaint" due to the integral use of this term in electronic medical records (EMRs) and the delivery system, we will work on further refining the definition to capture this concern and highlight it in the report.

The Committee agreed to build upon the recommendation to use the "presenting problem" concept as the standardized data element and basis for chief complaint-based quality measurement. Although chief complaints are the basis for these measures, the Committee acknowledged that denominators should focus on identifying patients using a combination of data elements including presenting problems, age, physical exam findings (e.g., vital signs), gender, and other similar intake information, to define a clinical syndrome as a way of grouping like patients. Committee members generally agreed on the use of these terms and definitions going forward with the modifications recommended by Ms. Haskell.

Environmental Scan Update

Jean-Luc Tilly, NQF Senior Project Manager, provided an update on the environmental scan. He reviewed the 40 conditions or chief complaints used and summarized findings of the scan. A total of 46 measures and 13 measure concepts were discovered across 15 different chief complaints. Mr. Tilly reviewed the conditions that did not yield search results for existing measures or measure concepts. The Committee followed with a brief discussion on how the search terms were grouped, additional conditions to consider, measure concept suggestions, and recommendations on which conditions could be further supported with existing clinical evidence. Committee members suggested the inclusion of conditions related to extremity injury, trauma beyond head trauma, and urinary complaints, as existing evidence supports those conditions. Dr. Venkatesh furthered this discussion by suggesting that if a measure concept is reliable but is not evidence-based, it still has value—particularly with regards to behavioral healthcare.

Overview and Discussions of Chief Complaint Standardization Landscape

Margaret Samuels-Kalow, NQF Chief Complaint Committee Co-chair, started the discussion on the lack of standard nomenclature across electronic medical records and the different approaches to standardizing that patient data. Dr. Samuels-Kalow introduced Committee member Dr. Steven Horng to provide an overview of a chief complaint nomenclature effort he participated in through ACEP (HaPPy – the Hierarchical Presenting Problem Ontology) and other considerations for chief complaint ontology for the Committee to consider. Committee member Dr. James McClay followed Dr. Horng's presentation with a summary of the challenges to adoption and implementation of a standard chief complaint nomenclature. Dr. McClay provided an overview of his work at Health Level-7 (HL-7) and their efforts to set standards for collecting documentation and data in the emergency department. The Committee then discussed how a standardized list of chief complaints could be implemented in emergency medicine practice through the support of bodies such as the National Library of Medicine and HL-7. Dr. Venkatesh

highlighted the importance of not creating a nomenclature list, but instead forming recommendations to guide the selection of a list. Jaime Lehner, a Committee member providing the measure developer's perspective, suggested sharing these recommendations with the CMS Measures Management System Blueprint to encourage measure developers to use similar standardized nomenclature when creating measures.

Public Comment

Ms. Chaudhry opened the web meeting to allow for public comment. No public comments were offered.

Next Steps

Ms. Chaudhry and Ms. Wilbon provided next steps, which included an overview of the key topics that will be discussed at the in person meeting, logistic information on the in-person meeting scheduled for January 28 and 29, 2019, and a request for the Committee to submit chief complaint measure concept ideas prior to the meeting. Survey submissions are due January 11, 2019.