Advancing Measurement of Diagnostic Excellence for Better Healthcare

The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation has selected NQF for its multistakeholder, consensus-driven measurement expertise to propel the healthcare quality community beyond currently intractable real-world challenges to high impact measures of diagnostic quality.

Accurately diagnosing a patient's condition is a foundational step in delivering high quality care. An error in diagnosis can significantly impact patient outcomes and result in protracted timelines for care, including unnecessary and potentially harmful services. A 2015 Institute of Medicine report found that "most people will experience at least one diagnostic error in their lifetime, sometimes with devastating consequences."[1] There is a critical need to strengthen the quality and accuracy of the diagnostic process, and to do so will require reliable measurement of diagnostic excellence. Diagnostic excellence refers to both the timeliness and accuracy of diagnoses. Despite numerous attempts over the past decade to improve diagnosis, measurement of diagnostic excellence has proved an intractable challenge. This owes, in part, to the fact that data required for measurement must leverage the full clinical context for care, not merely information in structured data fields.

The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation has led extensive work to address previous challenges to measuring diagnostic excellence, and through a portfolio of grants, has produced measures in three clinical areas: acute vascular events, infections, and cancer. Now, the Moore Foundation has engaged NQF to focus on overcoming the real-world barriers to implementing measures of diagnostic excellence. The work of Moore Foundation grantees over the past five years has identified numerous measurement challenges, such as difficulty accessing the types of data needed to assess diagnostic quality, and difficulties utilizing natural language processing[2] (NLP) that impeded progress toward implementing measures of diagnostic excellence.

For this project, the Moore Foundation has turned to NQF for its multistakeholder, consensus-driven measurement expertise to help address these measurement challenges. The three-year project will explore solutions to overcome key barriers to diagnostic quality methods and measurement:

1. **Identifying data standards** needed to speed interoperability.

2. **Recommending solutions** to existing diagnostic excellence measurement challenges.

3. **Developing a framework** and criteria for assessing NLP in clinical quality measures.

4. **Developing a "call to action"** to foster adoption of diagnostic excellence measurement.

5. **Creating a virtual repository** for diagnostic excellence quality measurement resources and guidance.

NQF will convene various multistakeholder groups, including an Advancing Measurement of Diagnostic Excellence Committee, an NLP Technical Expert Panel (TEP), and subcommittees to confront measurement challenges, and recommend solutions. The groups will convene for a series of in-person and virtual meetings, starting in summer 2023 and ending summer 2025. Public comment periods and listening sessions will provide additional opportunities for engagement. This initiative, culminating with a virtual, public repository of diagnostic excellence measurement resources and guidance, will conclude in fall 2025. For questions about the project, please contact DxExcellence@qualityforum.org.

[1] Committee on Diagnostic Error in Health Care; Board on Health Care Services; Institute of Medicine; The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Balogh EP, Miller BY, Ball JR, eds. Improving Diagnosis in Health Care. National Academies Press. December 29, 2015.

[2] Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. Initiative Strategy Detail. Published May 2, 2023. Accessed May 2, 2023. https://www.moore.org/initiative-strategy-detail?initiativeId=diagnostic-excellence.

Driving measurable health improvements together