



## POLICY & PRACTICE

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### Improvement Plan Gets Test

The American College of Cardiology is ready to try out its new practice-assessment and improvement program. Twenty practices will participate in a pilot of the Cardiovascular Practice Recognition Program during January 2010. The pilot will test how the program can set goals and targets for cardiovascular specialists, provide a road map for performance improvements, and standardize assessment methods. The ACC selected representatives of every type of practice: urban and rural, small and large, academic and hospital based. Electronic medical records are not necessary, but practices will be required to collect data during the month and submit it to a Web site. Each will receive a \$1,000 stipend to defray costs. The organization said it aims to collect enough data from the 20 practices to validate various program approaches to "continuous quality improvement."

### Americans Uneducated on Diabetes

Americans earn a "failing grade" on diabetes awareness, according to an online survey sponsored by the American Diabetes Association. Participants who answered a series of questions scored just 51% overall. Although more than three-fourths of respondents knew that not all diabetes patients need daily insulin injections, only 12% knew that the recommended diet for people with diabetes does not restrict starchy foods any more than does the diet recommended for all adults. "Many Americans have a very

limited understanding of the basic facts about diabetes, as well as the serious consequences for health that accompany the disease," Sue McLaughlin, the ADA's president for health care and education, said in a statement. "Unfortunately, numerous myths about diabetes exist, making it difficult for people to believe the science-based facts." The survey of more than 2,000 adults was conducted by Harris Interactive.

### Stroke More Common in Kids?

The rate of childhood stroke in a managed care plan was 2.4 per 100,000 person-years, two to four times as high as past estimates, according to an analysis of imaging studies and diagnostic coding. The previous underestimates relied on diagnostic coding alone, researchers from the University of California, San Francisco, wrote (Stroke 2009 Sept. 17 [doi: 10.1161/ strokeaha.109.564633]). The team analyzed the medical records of just over 2 million children aged 19 years or younger who were enrolled in the Kaiser Permanente managed care plan in Northern California from 1993 to 2003. Stroke cases were confirmed through chart reviews by neurologists. They found that radiology was significantly more sensitive (83%) than was diagnostic coding (39%).

### Adverse Event Reports Go Unused

The Food and Drug Administration's Center for Devices and Radiological Health fails to use adverse event reports

in a systematic manner to detect and address medical device safety problems, a report from the Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General found. Manufacturers and medical facilities are required to promptly submit reports to the FDA center following adverse events, which can include deaths, serious injuries, and device malfunctions. But the center has no documentation of following up on these events, and it fails to read most reports in a timely fashion, according to the report. Meanwhile, reports of problems with medical devices are increasing, the Inspector General's office found: The FDA center received about 73,000 adverse event reports in 2003 but more than 150,000 in 2007.

### New Surgeon General Confirmed

Family physician Regina Benjamin has been unanimously confirmed by the

Senate as the U.S. Surgeon General. Dr. Benjamin, founder and CEO of the Bayou La Batre (Ala.) Rural Health Clinic, will start her work by responding to the influenza A(H1N1) pandemic, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said in a statement. The American Academy of Family Physicians praised the confirmation. "All Americans will benefit from Dr. Benjamin's medical expertise, clinical experience, and advocacy for all patients," the academy's president, Dr. Lori Heim, said in a statement. "She is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to health care, regardless of economic status . . ." Dr. Heim also praised Dr. Benjamin's perseverance in providing care to the underserved. Since the late 1990s, her clinic was destroyed by two hurricanes, Georges and Katrina, as well as a fire.

—Alicia Ault

## DATA WATCH

### PhRMA Topped Health Sector Lobbying in Third Quarter

(in millions)



Source: U.S. Senate Office of Public Records, 2009 data

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