

20 Pilot Practices Collect \$1.4M in P4P Rewards

BY NELLIE BRISTOL
Contributing Writer

WASHINGTON — A total of \$1.4 million in pay-for-performance rewards was distributed to physicians in 20 group practices that participated in a pilot project sponsored by CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, Dr. Jon Shematek said at a meeting on health information technology sponsored by eHealth Initiative and Bridges to Excellence.

Thirty practices initially were selected for participation in the first year of a \$4.5 million, 3-year project, said Dr. Shematek, vice president for quality and medical policy at CareFirst. Eight dropped out, and rewards were given to the remaining practices that met National Committee for Quality Assurance certification requirements. The practices are located primarily in Maryland but also in Delaware and the District of Columbia. The practices treat a combined total of 50,000 patients.

CareFirst used the Bridges to Excellence model program developed by a group of employers, insurers, and physicians. Standards met by physicians addressed clinical information systems, use of evidence-based medicine, patient education and support, and care management.

Seventeen groups passed at a basic level, and three passed at an intermediate level, Dr. Shematek said. No groups passed at an advanced level.

Of the pilot practices, 14 had paper medical records, while 6 had partial electronic records, he added.

Practice improvements implemented by the groups included chronic disease registries and follow-up, electronic prescribing, follow-up of emergency department visits and inpatient admissions, improved rates of colonoscopy screening and diabetes eye exams, and enhanced patient education material.

Certified practices receive program recognition via a National Committee for Quality Assurance "practice connections" seal they can use in advertising.

Dr. Shematek said CareFirst is now looking at proposals from academic centers to evaluate quality, utilization, and cost of the program "as well as what qualitatively changed in the practice and what motivated doctors to participate." Participating practices will be compared with a control of nonparticipating groups. ■

F Y I

New Preventive Services PDA Tool

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality has released the Electronic Preventive Services Selector (ePSS). This tool is based on the recommendations of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, and allows clinicians to identify and offer screening, counseling, and preventive medication services. It is searchable by patient age, sex, and behavioral risk factors. For more information, visit www.epss.ahrq.gov.

Alternative Approach to Menopause

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine has online information on the role of complementary and alternative medicine in menopause. It includes a description of the symptoms of menopause, addresses concerns about hormone therapy, and gives an outline of scientific evidence on CAM therapies' effectiveness and safety for menopausal symptoms. To download the information for free, visit www.nccam.nih.gov/health/menopauseandcam.

Deciphering Health Care Language

Brochures explaining the common terms used in the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer, heart disease, and diabetes are available to help patients better understand their conditions. For more information, and to obtain sample copies of the brochures, contact the Medical Library Association by sending an e-mail to info@mlahq.org.

NIAID to Air New HIV Ads

To boost recruitment for its HIV vaccine trials and to dispel vaccine myths, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases will air TV commercials in the 14 U.S. cities with the largest concentrations of the most-affected demographic groups. The youth- and community-targeted ads are part of the agency's new "Be the Generation" campaign. For more information, go to www.bethegeneration.org.

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