

HEALTH CARE

NEWS AND INFORMATION

Volume 14 Number 20

June 15, 2007

Health Care: News and Information is a service of the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) to help our readers stay fully informed about the latest health care issues as we work to advance a high-quality health care system.

Jim Edwards, Editor

www.hlc.org

Health Care Regional Disparities Persist, Study Finds

A new study has found that regional disparities in health care quality remain a challenge. The differences vary state by state.

- The Commonwealth Fund conducted the survey, using 2006 data.
- The study ranked the states' health care based on 32 different factors. These fit into five categories: access, costs, quality, avoidable hospitalization, and length and quality of life.

The differences in health care indicate how greater health insurance coverage and health information technology usage might help make U.S. health care more uniform in quality, access and affordability.

- Having the low performers match the best performing states would "add up to real lives and real dollars." This would mean preventing 90,000 premature deaths, getting 9.5 million seniors basic screenings, covering 22 million of the uninsured, giving 4 million diabetics preventive care and saving Medicare \$22 billion a year.
- States with more insured residents had better showings on quality of care. The best overall states were Hawaii, Iowa, New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine. Those with the lowest performance included Nevada, Arkansas, Texas, Mississippi and Oklahoma.
- States with the best health care had insurance coverage approaching 90 percent. Those with lesser scores had 70 percent to 78 percent of residents insured.
- Deaths occurring before age 75 that might have been prevented were 50 percent fewer in Minnesota, Utah, Vermont, Wyoming and Alaska than in the states with the most premature deaths. Those were the District of Columbia, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. The difference was between an average of 74 deaths per 100,000 in the best-showing states, versus 142 in the worst performers.

Interestingly, the amount of money spent didn't automatically add up to better quality of health care. The answer lies in removing disparities in quality from across the country.

- Preventive measures, screenings and the like associated with being insured could further the uniformity of care. It could lead to better health outcomes. It could save health care dollars.

– MORE –

- Half of adults over 50 received all the recommended preventive care in Minnesota, but only one-third got them in Idaho.
- Massachusetts led the way in childhood immunizations at 94 percent. The bottom five states immunized less than three-fourths of children.

Using market-based solutions to give Americans greater consumer choice in health care could help drive quality improvement. Greater access to more options of affordable health coverage, coupled with adoption of health information technology, would go a long way toward achieving this goal. Empowering people with consumer choice and competition will lead to higher quality, fewer disparities and cost containment.

The Healthcare Leadership Council, representing the innovators in each sector of the health care industry, is committed to advancing a market-based health care system that values innovation and provides affordable, high-quality care.

HLC field directors:

Steve Knuth (651) 225-8449
(IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, WI)

Darren Katz (404) 885-9351
(AL, FL, GA, SC)

Paul Pearson (405) 488-0541
(AZ, CO, KS, NE, NM, OK, TX, UT)

Brad Crone (919) 834-8994
(KY, MD, NC, TN, VA, WV)

Larry Krutchik (818) 728-3355
(CA, ID, MT, NV, OR, WA)

Brian Feldman (404) 885-1723
(AR, CT, LA, MA, MO, MS, NY, RI)

Tom Maher (603) 228-3342
(DE, ME, NH, NJ, OH, PA, VT)

If this fax arrives at an incorrect fax machine, if additional individuals in your company would like to receive a copy, if a recipient would like to be removed from the distribution list, or if a name or fax number needs to be changed in our system, please fax this information to Amanda Uherek at 202-296-9561 or e-mail her at auherek@hlc.org.

**Healthcare Leadership Council
1001 Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 550 South
Washington, DC 20004
(202) 452-8700
www.hlc.org**