

QIOs to Improve Prescription Drug Therapy

Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) are working to improve outpatient prescription drug therapy under the new Medicare prescription drug benefit. Following is an explanation of the types of projects QIOs are leading; more detailed summaries of these projects are available in a July 2007 supplement to the *Journal of Managed Care Pharmacy*.

Mandated by Section 109 of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA), QIOs are required to offer quality improvement assistance to Medicare providers, practitioners, prescription drug plans (PDPs) and Medicare Advantage prescription drug plans (MA-PDs).

QIOs are working with drug plans and providers on quality improvement projects that focus on improving prescribing and safety in the delivery of prescription medications.

Quality improvement projects began in August 2006. Before then, QIOs conducted outreach to educate PDPs and MA-PDs on the role of QIOs in quality improvement and planned quality improvement projects focusing on the following options:

- **Improving prescribing, with an emphasis on assisting physician practices that use or are adopting e-prescribing.** These projects focus on avoiding the use of certain medications in the elderly, identifying and reducing clinically significant drug interactions, and avoiding duplicate medications.

The American Health Quality Association represents the national network of Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) that work to encourage the spread of best clinical practices and improve systems of care delivery. Visit www.ahqa.org.

- **Improving patient self-management through medication therapy management services (MTMS).** These projects focus on improving medication therapy management services, including improvement in patients' understanding of medications and potential side effects.
- **Improving disease specific therapy** using integrated Medicare Parts A, B and D data. These projects focus on avoiding specific medications in patients who have certain diseases or who take medications requiring therapeutic monitoring.

QIOs may also work on projects that address potentially significant issues in medication therapy. For example, some QIOs are conducting projects that focus on improving management of medication therapy across settings, such as from hospital discharge to home.

A July 2007 supplement to the *Journal of Managed Care Pharmacy* includes an overview of this work from a national perspective and a description of each state-based project being led by the QIO. The supplement, "Medicare Quality Improvement Organizations' Ambulatory Drug Therapy Improvement Activities and Partnerships With Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plans and Medicare Advantage Plans," is available online at: www.amcp.org.