



Executive Brief

April 2019

Background

Wisconsin has been a national leader in health care quality improvement for more than a decade. Achieving and sustaining that level of clinical excellence statewide requires a commitment to not only improve an individual organization, but to learn together and share best practices with other organizations to assure all patients receive high-quality, safe care.

The Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality (WCHQ) has been a trusted convener and facilitator of focused, statewide improvement initiatives for 15 years. Over that time, WCHQ has helped Wisconsin's provider community improve clinical performance in multiple areas. Today, Wisconsin has the opportunity to improve performance related to the per capita cost of health care. WCHQ's members have challenged the organization to take on bold initiatives that transcend its historic boundaries by partnering with new stakeholders and addressing the affordability aspect of the value equation of health care.

If Wisconsin health care provider organizations—working together—earned our state a national reputation for high-quality health care, can providers and stakeholders come together to increase the value of health care?

The WCHQ Board and members believe the answer to that question is a resounding “yes.”

Consistent with WCHQ's mission to support activities that lead to high-quality, affordable health care, the WCHQ Board approved a “value acceleration” initiative that will be facilitated by WCHQ staff and be adaptable to all member organizations.

The Affordability of Health Care is a Pressing Issue

The issue among purchasers, payers, employers and consumers is that health care has become unaffordable. The cost of care for the patient is a concern for health care providers, too, who are being asked to help find a solution. Following months of research, planning and multi-disciplinary stakeholder meetings, the Board approved a strategy and asked WCHQ staff to create a framework for evaluating proposals that would improve the affordability of health care.



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The WCHQ Value Acceleration Initiative: What Is it?

The Board authorized the selection of one initial priority all WCHQ members and stakeholders will commit to that will drive greater value for patients, employers, insurers and providers. **The priority selected for the first year of the Value Acceleration Initiative was Patients with Multiple Morbidities; with a particular focus on diabetes, hypertension and depression.**

The year one priority was selected based on an analysis of both clinical and claims data, member surveys and available literature. Improving care for patients and the efficiency by which care is delivered to patients with co-morbidities met the criteria that a Board-appointed advisory group established to evaluate priorities. The priority selected had to meet the following criteria:

- Associated with high-cost areas of care and/or procedures;
- There are gaps in performance or low performance compared to available benchmark data;
- Shows significant variation in practice;
- High utilization without demonstrating better patient outcomes;
- Align with WCHQ member and stakeholder priorities;
- Align with national, regional and state pay-for-performance programs; and,
- Represent significant patient safety concerns.

It is anticipated that the focus will expand to more than one priority in 2020 and future years.

What Will the Value Acceleration Initiative Accomplish?

WCHQ will accelerate members' success in achieving better results for patients with multiple morbidities by developing a comprehensive set of "best practices" that will encompass ways to improve value through clinical quality improvement, practice redesign, payment strategies, benefit plan design, and patient engagement/self-management. This new strategic initiative will result in:

- Continued and dramatic improvement in selected quality metrics to maintain Wisconsin's high national ranking;
- Achieving an improvement in Wisconsin's ranking on a per capita cost to be among the lowest five states in the country; and,
- An increase in member engagement and satisfaction.

In addition, WCHQ members will find new meaning in this work, which will lead to higher levels of engagement in quality improvement and set even higher standards for clinical excellence.

How Does the Value Acceleration Initiative Differ from WCHQ's Past Work?

While WCHQ's core work will not change, its focus is expanding beyond quality to include cost of care and to develop deeper relationships with purchasers, payers and patients. The Value Acceleration Initiative is not new work, it is the foundational work of WCHQ. The Value Acceleration Initiative takes the expertise of staff, leverages existing resources and focuses on improvement in a leading area of concern – better care for patients with multiple chronic diseases, better care coordination with fewer resources, and with that, improved efficiencies, higher patient satisfaction, better outcomes and lower costs for the patients, employers and payers.



Supporting Facts: Selection of Patients with Multiple Morbidities as the Value Priority

The Advisory Group considered a number of conditions before they selected “patients with multiple morbidities” as the first value acceleration priority. While there were compelling reasons to select any one of the conditions that were discussed, the cost and clinical data reinforced the Advisory Group’s selection.

One in four Americans have multiple (two or more) morbidities including, for example, arthritis, asthma, chronic respiratory conditions, diabetes, heart disease, human immunodeficiency virus infection, and hypertension. The prevalence of multiple morbidities increases with age. As the number of chronic conditions in an individual increases, the risk of negative outcomes also increase, including: mortality, poor functional status, unnecessary hospitalizations, adverse drug events, duplicative tests, and conflicting medical advice.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) State Data

People who have multiple chronic conditions are more likely to be readmitted to the hospital, have more emergency room visits and incur higher health care costs. The WCHQ Value Acceleration Initiative is focused on providing better care to those with co-morbid conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and depression, and reducing health care costs.

The Rate of 30-Day Hospital Readmission Increases with the Number of Chronic Conditions

	Number of Chronic Conditions				
	Overall	0 to 1	2 to 3	4 to 5	6+
<i>National</i>		5.70%	7.50%	10.80%	22.90%
<i>Wisconsin</i>		5.90%	7.50%	10.60%	21.50%

Emergency Room Visits per 1,000 Medicare Beneficiaries Increase with the Number of Chronic Conditions

	Number of Chronic Conditions				
	Overall	0 to 1	2 to 3	4 to 5	6+
<i>National</i>		181	420	769	2,001
<i>Wisconsin</i>		199	484	896	2,137

Per Capita Medicare Spending Increases with the Number of Chronic Conditions

	Number of Chronic Conditions				
	Overall	0 to 1	2 to 3	4 to 5	6+
<i>National</i>		\$2,032	\$5,906	\$11,537	\$32,247
<i>Wisconsin</i>		\$1,968	\$5,826	\$11,782	\$29,894



Who is Leading this Initiative?

The Board of Directors formed an Advisory Group to develop WCHQ's Value Acceleration Initiative. The Advisory Group selected the initial focus priority and will oversee the Steering Team that will identify best practices. The Advisory Group is primarily made up of Board members with additional participants from outside WCHQ's membership, and stakeholders may be added, with Board approval, as the work progresses.

The Advisory Group will, over time and as needed, include representatives from:

- WCHQ Members
- Statewide Advocacy Organizations
- Purchaser and Payer Organizations
- Medicaid Program
- Employers
- Consumer Advocates

Current Advisory Group Members:

Imran Andrabi, MD – Chair, ThedaCare

Tim Bartholow, MD, WEA Insurance Corporation

William Cannon, MD, Fort HealthCare

Cheryl DeMars, The Alliance

Christopher Elfner, Bellin Health

Michelle Graham, MD, UnitedHealthcare

Kori Krueger, MD, Marshfield Clinic Health System

Mike McGrail, MD, Aspirus

Mitzi Melendez-Prodoehl, WI Department of Health Services, Medicaid Program

Andrew Resnick, MD, Froedtert Hospital and Medical College of WI

Dave Rushlow, MD, Mayo Clinic Health System – Franciscan Healthcare

Michelle, Schreiber, MD, Adviser to the Group Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services

Next Steps

WCHQ is currently forming a steering team, comprised of member and stakeholder representatives with deep subject matter expertise and influence within their own organizations. The Steering Team will meet regularly to review available literature and data, to consult with specialists and specialty organizations, and ultimately determine best practice recommendations for broad distribution and implementation. The best practice recommendations will span the health care continuum, including clinical workflows, benefit design, and contract language and provisions. The recommendations of the Steering Team will be collated into a formal report that will be approved by the Advisory Group and then presented to the Board of Directors for endorsement. The recommendation report will be distributed to WCHQ members and stakeholders.

For More Information:

Gabrielle Rude, PhD, Director, Practice Transformation, grude@wchq.org

Mary Kay Fahey, Director, Membership and Business Development, mkfahey@wchq.org