

News Release

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New Mexico Hospital Quality Rates Show Improvement in Most Areas Although Most Measures Remain Below National Rates

Albuquerque, NM – The New Mexico Medical Review Association (NMMRA) announced today that data released from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) indicate that New Mexico hospitals are improving the quality of care they are delivering in most areas being measured but remain behind most national rates.

NMMRA, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) for New Mexico, tracks hospital rates and improvement levels for quality measures related to the care provided to acute myocardial infarction (AMI), heart failure, and pneumonia patients, as well as for care in preventing surgical infection. National vs. state rates for 21 measures for a specified three-month period in 2005 compared to a three-month period in 2006 show that New Mexico hospitals improved in 16 of the 21 measures reported. Eight measures (four AMI measures, one heart failure measure, and three pneumonia measures) showed even greater improvement compared to national improvement rates.

The greatest improvement was in providing adult smoking cessation advice and counseling for AMI patients: New Mexico rates improved 22 percent compared to a 6-percent improvement in national rates. While vastly improved, the New Mexico rate of 94 percent remains below the national rate of 97 percent for this measure. Another measure – providing discharge instructions for heart failure patients – shows that New Mexico rates improved 18 percent compared to a 14-percent improvement in national rates. The state rate of 44 percent, however, is still well below the national rate of 70 percent.

While the rates for many of the quality measures are improving in New Mexico, the rate of improvement is generally not increasing for as many measures as is national improvement. Eleven of the measures show lower improvement rates for New Mexico compared to national improvement rates for those same measures. Nationally, only one measure failed to improve while one other remained at a constant rate. When examining New Mexico's quality rates (rather than its improvement rates) for 2006, state rates are below national rates in 16 of the 21 measures.

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However, for one measure (antibiotic selection according to guidelines for pneumonia patients), New Mexico hospitals have a rate of 87 percent, which exceeds the national rate of 79 percent. In addition, New Mexico improved by 9 percent compared to no improvement nationally for this measure.

“Hospitals in this state have been working diligently to improve their quality of care, and this is demonstrated in the data,” said Carlene Brown, NMMRA quality improvement manager, “Work remains to be done to improve publicly reported quality-of-care rates and ensure that processes are developed and sustained to ensure that the appropriate care is given to each patient, every time. It is also important to note that this data provides only a slice of information about hospital care and does not define hospital quality in its entirety.”

NMMRA is under contract with CMS to help hospitals identify gaps in care-delivery systems and explore opportunities for creating more efficient, effective care. Hospitals work with NMMRA on several national projects aimed at improving the quality and safety of inpatient care and to report their rates for nationally approved quality measures. These measures help providers, payers and patients to evaluate the quality of care given in New Mexico’s hospitals.

Consumer-friendly quality rates can be found for individual New Mexico hospitals on CMS’ national public Web site Hospital Compare (www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov/) and on a Web site sponsored by the New Mexico Hospital Association called NMCheckPoint (www.nmcheckpoint.org/).

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About NMMRA

NMMRA is an Albuquerque-based, non-profit, physician-sponsored organization. Serving as a resource to the state's health care community and to Medicare beneficiaries, NMMRA seeks to fulfill its mission to facilitate demonstrable and continuous improvement in the quality of health care and achieve its vision to be a premier and innovative leader in improving health care. NMMRA has served continuously as the state's only federally contracted Medicare QIO since 1984. NMMRA also serves as the state's Medicaid External Quality Review Organization.

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