

**Maine Quality Forum
Advisory Council
September 10, 2004
Minutes of Meeting**

MQF Advisory Council members present: Robert McArtor, Laureen Biczak, Jim McGregor, Lisa Miller, David White, Stephen Shannon, Jeffrey Holmstrom, and Janice Wnek. Dennis Shubert, Maine Quality Forum, Karynlee Harrington, Dirigo Health Agency and Maureen Booth, Muskie School of Public Service were also in attendance.

Minutes

Minutes of the August 13, 2004 meeting were accepted with a correction to reflect that Steve Shannon was present at the meeting.

Dirigo Health Update

Karynlee Harrington, newly appointed Executive Director of Dirigo Health, updated the group on Dirigo Health.

- Negotiations have been completed with Anthem. Marketing will begin on October 1, with an effective date of coverage January 1, 2005.
- Training sessions with Anthem's internal staff have begun. Future training will be conducted with brokers, provider offices and advocate groups.
- The second phase of marketing for *Dirigo Choice* will begin in late October or early November.

Nurse Staffing Ratios, LD 616

Dennis Shubert updated members on progress to respond to the Legislative request for a review of LD 616, a proposal to institute nurse staffing ratios in hospitals. The Provider Group has met twice with the Technology Assessment Committee to give their input on a preliminary report prepared by the Muskie School. Additional information is being requested from hospitals on their current staffing levels. This information will be analyzed by the Technology Assessment Committee and incorporated into a draft report for review by the MQF Advisory Council at their November meeting. The Advisory Council will provide their final recommendations on the report, which must be submitted to the legislature by January, 2005.

Charter for the Performance Indicator Committee

Dr. Shubert reviewed a proposed charter for the Performance Indicator Committee (PIC) clarifying their role and the flow of communication from the MQF Advisory Council. The charter was accepted as proposed. It was further proposed that funds be set aside to bring in outside experts to consult with the PIC on the viability of specific measures and the interpretation of findings on measures. After discussion, it was agreed that funding would be made available from the MQF to hire a panel of health services research experts

to provide advice and guidance on the selection, use, and interpretation of measures, when appropriate and needed. An informal request was made that the slate of experts be shared with the Advisory Council for comment.

MQF Website

Dr. Shubert reported that the website did not debut on September 9 as originally scheduled due to concerns about some of the reported data. The threshold for determining when data are “good enough” for posting is a difficult one to determine. Some of the data are likely to be disquieting but are intended to motivate the system to improve. The website has been shared with the Maine Medical Association and the Maine Hospital Association as it was developed. Cost and mortality data were subsequently pulled from the site based on feedback received.

While acknowledging the need for transparency in the system, Dr. McArtor emphasized the responsibility of the MQF to be an honest broker of information that stimulates quality improvement and not just controversy.

Dr. Shannon provided feedback on the readability of the text as determined by UNE literacy experts. According to this review, the text came in at 12-17 grade levels. It was generally agreed that the text intended for consumers should not exceed 6-7 grade levels. A recommendation was made that future revisions of the website clearly demarcate sections that are directed primarily at consumers.

Given concerns, it was agreed to hold publication of the website until the end of the month. In the interim, Drs. Shubert and McArtor will continue to work out their concerns and poll MQF Advisory Council members on issues that cannot be resolved.

Cost and Mortality Charts

Although decisions were made to pull these charts from the website, Dr. Shubert reviewed their content and interpretation of the data. Dr. Shubert also commented on the limited nature of the data and the need for more detailed data in the future. The information presents adjusted average total cost and case mix adjusted mortality rates by hospital peer group for 2001. Dr. Shubert stressed the complexity of being able to interpret the information and the importance of looking at the data over time to obtain more of a trend line. Oftentimes, further analysis will be needed to fully understand the factors contributing to outliers.

Public Comments

Chris McCarthy from the MQF thanked members for their comments on the website and reiterated the efforts made to understand and incorporate member concerns. Mr. McCarthy also discussed briefly the trade off between specificity and sensitivity in data analysis.

Sandy Parker of the Maine Hospital Association cautioned that not all measures are suited to report cards or facility comparisons. She thanked the MQF for sharing work

product on the web site with the MHA. She reiterated that the MHA is dedicated to accurate information about quality of care.

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 PM.