



Reaching Milestones in Electronic Clinical Quality Measures

By Rick Moore

At NCQA, we're proud of our work. For more than 25 years, our quality measures have ensured that health plans deliver the best care to their members. Now we are expanding our drive to measure quality in clinical practices, and we're striving to reach an important milestone: approval of the NCQA electronic clinical quality measure (eCQM) test methodology by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) as part of the ONC Health IT Certification Program.

What Does This Mean?

The ONC currently provides the health care industry with health information technology (HIT) test tools and procedures as part of its program. As part of completing our submission to ONC, NCQA demonstrated that its eMeasure test methodology yielded the same results as the ONC-administered testing tool for CQMs (Cypress). In addition, we also intend to apply to become an ONC Authorized Test Lab (ATL) for electronic quality measure testing. Once approved as an ONC-ATL, it would mean organizations that use our robust methodology will not only get an NCQA certification, but will also get test results that can equally be used to be ONC-ACB certified for each of those measures.

We couldn't have done this testing alone. We thank Medisolv, a health care quality reporting and management software company, for agreeing to help us with producing data to compare our approach to the one currently used by ONC.

"We are very pleased to be able to support the ONC testing of NCQAs measure validation methodology using our eCQM experts and nationally recognized ENCOR quality reporting software," says Dr. Zahid Butt, CEO of Medisolv.

Why Is This Important?

The federal government, and much of the health quality universe, is working to rate providers on the value of care they provide to patients. A value rating gives providers a clear idea of how they are performing—and it also dictates payment.

This becomes all the more important as practices are required to report data on their level of performance regarding clinical quality. Higher payments are the reward of higher quality.

What's Next?

ONC approval of our testing methodology and our application for ONC-ATL status will be important steps for NCQA. With this designation, NCQA hopes to provide the industry with a robust test methodology. Under MACRA laws, vendors that achieve the NCQA eMeasure validation seal can also participate in government-sponsored pay-for-value programs. They can also submit their clinical data for NCQA PCMH Recognition and to plans for streamlined collection and reporting of HEDIS health plan performance rates.

As the industry moves from fee-for-service to value-based payment, we look forward to assisting with the validation of nationally comparative performance ratings to improve the quality of healthcare for all Americans. So yes, we are proud of our work and our effort to bring quality measures to practices. And we also look forward to earning ONC full approval and authorization to become an ONC-ATL as our nation's health care system becomes more reliant on HIT data.