

Six Ways to Improve Quality and Reduce Overall Costs of Care



Enhancing quality and lowering overall costs are essential to physicians' success, as healthcare shifts to value-based payment models. The following strategies can help doctors achieve these goals:

<input type="checkbox"/> INCREASE PATIENT ACCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> ADD MID-LEVEL PROVIDERS
Better access improves care by addressing problems earlier. It reduces overall costs by preventing unnecessary emergency room visits, hospitalizations and the like. Tactics include making same-day appointments available, adding evening and weekend office hours, and providing 24/7 phone availability.	Physician assistants, nurse practitioners and other mid-level staff can help doctors increase patient access and take on many of the improvements described in this list—from navigation to medication reconciliations.
<input type="checkbox"/> ADOPT AN EHR	<input type="checkbox"/> PROVIDE NAVIGATION
If you haven't already done this, now is the time. Electronic Health Records (EHRs) leverage a myriad of advantages over paper records: greater accuracy, better tracking of patients' health, and easier identification of gaps in care. Moreover, it's very difficult to report quality metrics using paper records. With a properly structured EHR, required reporting is much easier.	Make sure patients receive education and guidance about their chronic diseases. For instance, ensure that your diabetic patients know what to do if their blood sugar drops, so they don't go to the emergency room unnecessarily. Work proactively with high-risk patients to help them get the right care, at the right place, at the right time.
<input type="checkbox"/> REVIEW MEDICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> CLOSE QUALITY GAPS
Conduct a "medication reconciliation" at every encounter. Ask the patient to bring in all their prescriptions, then review them for accuracy, potential interactions (especially with drugs prescribed by outside specialists), and documentation in the patient's record. The biggest medication errors occur upon discharge from the hospital: dosages are changed, or the patient is never put back on their medicine. Medication reconciliation is one of the most effective ways to reduce overall costs of care.	Make every patient visit an opportunity to close any gaps in care. For instance, if a patient comes in for a sore throat, make an appointment to return for blood pressure tracking. Bring Medicare patients in two or three times a year. Have a staff member reach out to them, order their lab work, obtain the results, and schedule the appointment. Reach out similarly to non-Medicare patients as well.

Remember: all payers require practices to provide documentation around quality goals. Determine how you will document quality and make sure you can prove the information you report.

To learn how your practice could benefit from practice management and clinical best practices as part of Consensus Health, please call (856) 762-2469 or email info@consensushealth.com.