

# What Quality Measures for Improving Patient Care

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## Introduction

As a patient and advocate, I have encountered many dedicated, compassionate healthcare professionals committed to providing the best possible care and outcomes for patients. Unfortunately, I have also witnessed the devastating effects that breakdowns in our healthcare system have on patients. The importance of evaluating, analyzing, and addressing these breakdowns in care and finding solutions cannot be overemphasized in terms of patient care and such solutions often begin with establishing stringent quality measures of the provision of care.

For the patient, the end goal is patient-centered care which is efficient, effective, and established as a result of patient-provider collaboration. We seek accurate diagnosis, timely and appropriate care which leads to better quality of life and information regarding our prognosis. There is no single measure of what constitutes quality; rather, multiple factors come into play, and the system as a whole must be evaluated and constantly readjusted to meet patient needs. However, it seems to me that some basic factors must be taken into account in any system of measurement.

First, we, as patients, seek an accurate diagnosis. We wish to know you are performing all relevant and necessary tests while refraining from putting us through unnecessary, uncomfortable, and costly procedures. We desire an explanation as to why specific tests are required, how they will be performed, and what information they will provide. We seek prompt scheduling and results-sharing and clear elucidation of all findings as well. Do you have a system in place to assure you are following established protocols and guidelines? Are you measuring how quickly tests are scheduled and results are delivered? Are you aware when patients do not comprehend the information you endeavor to convey?

Regarding treatments, we wish to be respected and to be engaged as equal partners in our own care. We would like to be included in setting treatment goals and want you to consider our personal quality of life goals and not simply pre-determined objectives you believe to be appropriate. We wish to be informed of all our options, the risk and success rates of each, why you believe the specific treatment you are recommending will best meet our needs, and how our lives will be improved by pursuing a particular alternative. We are eager to know you hear us, empathize with our plight, and are actively working to adjust treatments when they fail to produce desired results. We wish to know our care is being coordinated and that all providers involved have our best



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interests at heart and are following a mutually-established care plan. Are you measuring our satisfaction in these areas? Are you following established treatment routines and guidelines? Are you evaluating our improvement, our progress toward our quality of life goals? Are you hearing our feedback and making necessary adjustments to our care when we believe our needs are not being met? Are you monitoring and recording our physical reactions to treatments and clearly communicating the need for changes as well as what you hope to achieve with such modifications?

In terms of prognosis, we would like to have an accurate assessment and description of what constitutes our likely course. We seek empathetic yet honest discussions about what our future holds and truthful estimations of the illness' progression and our odds of delaying it. Are you informing us of changes and setbacks in our condition? Do you schedule appointments and adjust our care plan frequently enough to accommodate these changes? Have you informed us of what further actions are necessary should we experience crisis?

As patients, we rely upon you to consider the above needs and to properly measure, analyze, and evaluate our progress toward these goals. We seek people, technology, and systems which bring us closer to producing better outcomes. We understand that sometimes healthcare professionals can do everything right and the outcome will still not be ideal. We simply wish to know you are following best practices and have a genuine interest in our well-being. Your quality measurements and clear communication regarding these matters adds to our patient satisfaction – and that is certainly a meaningful measure by anyone's standards.