



Quality Institute Newsletter

**A bi-weekly look at the Business & Politics of
Health Care in New Jersey**



DECEMBER 20, 2018

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A PRESCRIPTION FOR BETTER HEALTHCARE IN NEW JERSEY

It's Time to Revamp Prior Authorizations

Earlier this year, we invited primary care physicians, including pediatricians, to join us for dinner and discussion. We wanted to know why New Jersey physicians have low participation rates in both Medicaid and Medicare.

We expected to hear a great deal about low reimbursement rates. Instead, we heard about the daily frustrations of physicians. They feel continually second guessed by insurers —especially when it comes to prior authorization. Even physicians willing to jump through the necessary hoops complain the hoops keep moving. And these hoops, they say, add little value while taking the joy out of practicing medicine.

The physicians cited one particularly painful area — approvals for medication, one of the top three areas of Utilization Management appeals in New Jersey. With so many health plans and pharmacy benefit managers, each with different formularies and tiers for prescription drugs, doctors find it challenging to focus on what's best for their patients. And often the preferred drug lists change during the year, further adding to the administrative burden to both doctor and patient.

One doctor, trying to order buprenorphine to help a patient addicted to opioids, told us he was on the phone battling an insurance company for the entire drive from his office in Monmouth County to Atlantic City, which is over 85 miles and rounds out to about 90 minutes.

Despite technological advances, not enough insurers make the authorization process simple and doctors complain about the amount of time they and their staff spend on the tedious process. And what really irks providers, and patients, is that after lengthy processes, few requests are denied. And many of the denials are overturned on appeal.

Shouldn't there be a better way to strategically design a prior authorization process?

At the Quality Institute, we think the answer is yes. That's why we're calling for a reevaluation of the state's laws and regulations around utilization management and prior authorization. There hasn't been a comprehensive review of these areas in about a decade. Much has changed in health care since then. Other groups, such as the Medical Society of New Jersey, also are calling for revisions. You can read the society's recent report [here](#). This calls for fewer drugs and procedures to be subject to prior authorization and greater automation and transparency.

Meanwhile, a coalition of organizations, including the American Hospital Association, America's Health Insurance Plans, and the American Medical Association, created a [consensus statement](#) that calls for improving the prior authorization process. One recommendation calls for adjustments when providers participate in risk-based payment contracts. We heard similar sentiment at our Quality Breakfast with Catalyst for Payment Reform, a non-profit organization that helps employers and payers get better value for their health care dollars. Clinicians on our panel said they believe providers would be more willing to accept financial risk if the administrative burden of prior authorizations was eased. So, revamping prior authorization could further payment reform.

I'm not ready to toss out prior authorization altogether. We know unnecessary care drives up health care costs and even harms patients. But we also need to recognize that senseless barriers to care contribute to physician burnout, so we need to take the needs of patients and physicians seriously.

At the Quality Institute, we have a history of successfully convening work groups on many complex issues and we stand ready to help here, too. We can provide a supportive or leadership role and bring together providers, insurers, legislators, and state leaders to the table to listen to each other and craft solutions. I

am eager for your thoughts and encourage you to reach out.



Take Five with Mayor Gayle Brill Mittler, Mayor of Highland Park

Mayor Gayle Brill Mittler, Mayor of Highland Park, explains how she's creating a culture of health in her community.

The Quality Institute's Mayors Wellness Campaign (MWC) designated Highland Park a "Healthy Town" last year for activities such as free yoga sessions with the mayor; a walking school bus; and downtown outdoor "living rooms." How does a community become a MWC "Healthy Town" designee?

I think the most important element for success is for a mayor to be an active participant in the wellness program. For instance, here in Highland Park we are a densely populated community within 1.7 square miles. We have sidewalks, and a downtown. I can walk from the middle of my town to train stations, theaters, and white tablecloth restaurants or BYOB's. I walk to work everyday, weather permitting. And in spring and summer I lead weekly walks around town. I participate in the free yoga classes for our residents.



You also need a well-led and dedicated group of community volunteer leaders. We reached out to medical professionals, and our Mayor's Wellness Campaign chairperson is a well-known cardiologist, Dr. Cliff Lacy. So, you need volunteers committed to healthy living and you, as mayor, need to be personally involved.

How does the MWC support your efforts?

We met with Adrian (Diogo) and other Quality Institute staff to brainstorm for ideas. They gave us guidance, tools, and resources—and were very well versed in health quality. We often look to the [MWC](#)

[Toolkit](#) for new programming ideas such as our Walking School Bus and Yoga with the Mayor. The MWC also provided us with [Aunt Bertha](#), which is a social service search engine that connects our residents to local services. The MWC has connected us to nurse volunteers, nutritionists, and local health care systems. The Quality Institute's MWC is a great resource for mayors looking to start a wellness campaign with their residents.

Highland Park is one of two communities working with the Quality Institute on the Mayors Wellness Campaign PLUS (MWC PLUS) initiative, funded by the Aetna Foundation. Can you tell us how that works in Highland Park?

A good portion of the funding enables us to put together programs for seniors that focus on healthy eating, including diets for people with diabetes. We also have health fairs, stretching Yoga with the Mayor classes, and dance classes. After yoga, the grant enabled us to have speakers from the local hospital come in and address health topics at the end of each session. Topics included diabetes and women's health. Everything is provided at no cost.

Your community has been creative in coming up with low-to no-cost activities that support health—in all age groups. How do you come up with all these innovative ideas?

We just keep brainstorming. Our PBA has an interesting program. When one of our police officers sees a child riding a scooter or bike with a helmet they get a "ticket" for an ice cream cone or slice of pizza. This rewards their safety practices. We have a "celebrity" chef who comes in and actually works with local restaurants to create healthy menus that we videotape and put on local TV. Right now, we have defibrillators in all public buildings and high traffic stores, such as supermarkets and gyms. We created downtown "living rooms" on busy corners so residents can take a walk downtown and hang out, and on Thursdays in the summer we have free music. You work with your volunteers and listen to everyone's ideas.

What are some of your future goals for the Mayors Wellness Campaign in Highland Park?

Through community donations and working with a local restaurant run by refugees, we provide a healthy lunch to low-income students on days that school is out. And in our summer camp, we provide lunches to all children so the low-income children don't stand out. One goal is to expand nutrition and activities to teens, who can be harder to reach. So we'll continue to work with MWC to promote wellness

in various ways for the entire community.

Save the Dates!

Thursday, January 24th, 2019: The QI Collaborative will host “Best Practices around Safer Prescribing of Opioids” with **Kevin T. Bain, PharmD, MPH, BCPS, BCGP, CPH, FASCP, Sr. Vice President, Research & Development, Tabula Rasa HealthCare** as part of the GPTN webinar series. Kevin will discuss how drug interactions and genetic variants influence opioid response, strategies for mitigating drug interactions influencing opioid response, and how to apply mitigating strategies to patient cases to practice safer prescribing of opioids. **Physicians, nurses, practice managers, and office staff should attend this free webinar that is also a CE credit opportunity for all eligible physicians and nurses!**



Register Now!

Thursday, March 21, 2019: Join the New Jersey Innovation Institute and the Quality Institute for the [Annual Innovation Showcase](#) with Keynote speaker **Former Governor and HHS Secretary Mike Levitt**.



Medicaid

Pioneering health care organizations throughout the U.S. are testing new models to improve care for complex, high-need populations. Yet most of these activities are happening in isolation, with little opportunity for innovators to learn from each other and collectively advance best practices. Medicaid enrollees with complex health care needs account for significantly higher utilization and expenses. The recent **Blueprint for Complex Care**, developed by the National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, and the Center for Health Care Strategies provides a strategic plan to unite the complex care community and advance the emerging field. Made possible through support from The Commonwealth Fund, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and The SCAN Foundation, the report draws from experts and front-line stakeholders across the country to assess the current state of the complex care field and outline actionable recommendations to improve care for the nation's most vulnerable patients. Learn more, including how to get involved, [here](#).

If you have questions, please contact Matt D'Oria at mdoria@njhcqi.org or Kate Shamszad at kshamszad@njhcqi.org.

The Quality Institute's Medicaid work is funded by [The Nicholson Foundation](#).



Mayors Wellness Campaign



Rahway recently hosted the first annual Rahway Fitness Crawl as part of our Mayors Wellness Campaign PLUS (MWC PLUS) initiative. Mayor Giacobbe kicked off the event with a fitness session in front of City Hall, giving out fruit and water bottles to participants. Medals were awarded to those who completed an obstacle course.

The MWC PLUS initiative works with leaders in Rahway and Highland Park to develop sustainable programs that address healthy lifestyle promotion, nutritional education, chronic disease management, and improved access to social services through [Union Connects](#)—a website powered by the social service referral platform [Aunt Bertha](#). MWC PLUS initiative is generously supported by the [Aetna Foundation](#).

MWC Healthy Town

Have your town recognized as one of the healthiest towns in New Jersey! Share the MWC Healthy Town Application with your mayor to help put your town in the running. The MWC Healthy Town designation distinguishes communities in which mayors have made healthy lifestyles a top priority and are actively engaging all the members of their community. The [MWC Healthy Town Application](#) must be received by the Quality Institute by **5 pm, January 25, 2019**.



Have questions about MWC? Contact Adrian Diogo at adiogo@njhcqi.org.



Mayor Onderko of Manville and Mary Anne Serra.

The Somerset County COYL Task Force concluded an 8-week program at the Manville Library, which featured Mayor Onderko. This session closed with a Five Wishes Workshop, a tool from the MWC Toolkit. Through this tool, participants explore the “Five Wishes” type of living that addresses personal, emotional, spiritual, and medical needs of individuals. Learn more about how the MWC toolkit can strengthen your community’s engagement in healthy lifestyles [here](#).

COYL, a program of the Quality Institute’s Mayors Wellness Campaign, engages communities in fruitful dialogue about end-of-life wishes in ‘community living room’ settings. To get involved with your local COYL Task Force, contact Adelisa Perez at aperez@njhcqi.org.

COYL is generously supported by [The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey](#).

Quality Corner



Last call: December 31, 2018, is the last chance to submit a 2018 Leapfrog Hospital Survey! All hospitals that want Leapfrog Hospital Survey results, including updates to surveys already submitted this year, and to be included in the Spring 2019 Leapfrog Safety Grade calculations, must submit their Hospital Survey **by December 31st**. Please contact the [Leapfrog Help Desk](#) with any questions.



Congratulations to the 12 New Jersey hospitals that were named Leapfrog 2018 Top Hospital winners! This honor is awarded to less than 6% of hospitals across the U.S. and highlights these hospitals' commitment to safety and quality.

Top Teaching Hospital awardees include: CarePoint Health-Bayonne Medical Center, Jersey Shore University Medical Center, Monmouth Medical Center, Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, Ocean Medical Center, RWJ University Hospital Somerset, St. Joseph's University Medical Center, and Virtua Voorhees Hospital.

Top General Hospital awardees include: Bayshore Medical Center, Inspira Medical Center-Woodbury, Riverview Medical Center, and RWJ University Hospital Hamilton. Learn more about Top Hospitals [here](#).

Shout Outs

Cheers to **Adelisa Perez**, our Director of Quality, on completing her Masters of Science in Nursing Leadership from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. With this achievement under her belt, Adelisa will put her degree to work for the Quality Institute by developing quality improvement and safety initiatives and engaging in policy analysis and patient advocacy — all aimed at improving health outcomes.

Congratulations to **AtlantiCare** on its innovative end-of-life care program—NODA—No One Dies Alone. We are glad to have you at our table for the Atlantic County COYL task force. [Read more](#).



Calendar & Industry Events

1.29.2019 | [Leapfrog Quality Breakfast](#). Join the Quality Institute in a forum to recognize hospitals that are in the top of their field regarding safety and quality practices, as measured by the [Leapfrog Hospital Safety Survey](#). We'll recognize New Jersey hospitals that received the [2018 Leapfrog Top Hospital designation](#). Katie Burggraf Stewart, Director of Health Care Ratings at The Leapfrog Group, will discuss survey changes in the 2019 Leapfrog Hospital Safety Survey, including the new hospital outpatient and ambulatory surgery center surveys.

3.24.2019 | [National Quality Forum's 20th Annual Conference](#). The Quality Institute encourages all health care leaders to attend the Annual Conference hosted by the National Quality Forum (NQF) to learn about the latest opportunities to improve quality for their communities and patients. Among the vast lineup of speakers is the Quality Institute's President & CEO and Chair of the NQF Consensus Standards Approval Committee, Linda Schwimmer. [Learn more and register now](#).

ABOUT US

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OUR INITIATIVES

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- Health Matters Poll
- Mayors Wellness Campaign
- QI Collaborative
- The Leapfrog Group



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